Hafa Adai!

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SSHS JLAB team places within Top 10 at nationals. PAGE 5

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IPI eyes November reopening

By BEN BLASCHKE
INSIDE ASIAN GAMING

Editor’s Note: Reprinted with permission

Imperial Pacific International has announced plans to reopen its Saipan casino, Imperial Palace Saipan by November.

Announcing its fiscal year 2021 financial results on Friday, which saw loss narrowed from HK$7.39 billion a year earlier to HK$1.07 billion, IPI

See IPI on Page 4

USDOL, IPI accord seeks to purge IPI of contempt

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. Department of Labor and Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC have entered into a second amended consent judgment that would require IPI to pay USDOL over $2 million because IPI was found in contempt, again, of the court’s previous injunction in favor of USDOL in its case against IPI over Fair Labor Standards Act violations.

According to the second amended consent judgment that was signed by both IPI and USDOL, U.S. Labor Secretary Martin J. Walsh recently found IPI to be in violation of H-2B regulations, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, and the FLSA arising from its failure to pay the promised rate and the accompanying FLSA overtime premium pay

See USDOL on Page 4

PUA payout extended to June 2023

» Benavente says $400,000 dispersed every week to PUA applicants; 1,900 applicants still waiting for their benefits

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente disclosed Friday that they got an extension to June 2023 on the administrative side as well as payout for the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. That

Benavente

See PUA on Page 4

SUKIYAKI EATING CONTEST WINNERS
The winners of the Sukiyaki Eating Contest pose with Marianas Visitors Authority officials for a souvenir photo during last Saturday’s Taste of the Marianas Food Festival. Sachiyo Masubuchi of Japan, third from right, won first place in the contest. The other winners were George Cabrera, second place; Nilo Jr. Dino, third place; and Regino Ben, fourth place.
CHRYSTAL MARINO

Story on Page 2

TRIP Japan inaugural flight on Sept. 1

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Marianas Visitors Authority says the inaugural flight for TRIP Japan is set to arrive on Sept. 1 and will be the first of many flights expected to bring in over 8,000 Japanese visitors to Saipan throughout the rest of the year.

In a brief interview with MVA managing director Priscilla Iakopo, the recent announcement of United Airlines’ Japan-Saipan route will

See TRIP on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

INSIDE

NATION
Pride parades kick off with fears about losing freedoms won through decades of activism.
PAGE 12

ASIA
Days after an earthquake devastated a remote region of Afghanistan, help is in short supply.
PAGE 13

LIFE & STYLE
How does Rick Astley handle being part of an internet meme? He rolls with it, obviously.
PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Local, international visitors check out final Taste weekend

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
SAIPAN TRIBUNE INTERN

The final weekend of the 23rd Taste of the Marianas Festival and Beer Garden again drew hundreds of both island residents and international visitors to the Garapan Fishing Base, just in time as the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games was winding down with a closing ceremony last Saturday.

This closing weekend of the Taste of the Marianas food festival last Friday, Saturday, and Sunday also saw the presence of visiting U.S. Navy sailors and U.S. Marines, who relished the opportunity to see local sights and taste the local cuisine.

Jordan Gilchrist of Michigan, who did not specify his rank in the U.S. Navy, described the festival as "pretty amazing."

"I mean we didn't know what to expect, coming in to Saipan—we've never been here—so coming here and just having this thing going on…and all the food around, it's actually been pretty good, really amazing food. It's actually kind of cool to see [an] island come together like a family [for] a cool event like [this]," he said.

The event was also attended by many NMPG athletes. Palau delegate River Thomas found the whole setup—the lights, the booths, and each business doing its own vibe—"wonderful. I feel like a lot of care was put into it. And the music is amazing. The food is amazing. And the people are so nice, like I feel so welcomed, like there should be Taste of the Marianas every night!"

According to Marianas Visitors Authority's community project manager Martin Duenas, the food festival, usually held every Saturday in the month of May, was moved to June so it would coincide with the Pacific Mini Games and give visiting athletes, technical officials, and media a taste of the local culture.

Thomas agrees that it was a great idea. "I heard it was supposed to be earlier but you guys moved it, so the athletes can appreciate it. I think that was awesome [because] I'm having the best time at the Taste of the Marianas."

Faye Ghemu, who is the Chef de Mission for the Solomon Islands national team, said this was her first time to attend a food festival "and it's been great getting to taste the variety and the different kinds of food you guys have to offer here in the Marianas, and it's been a wonderful experience to be able to come to the Games and then also to experience the Taste of Marianas. …I've tasted some food flavors that I haven't had before so that's amazing!"

Many at the festival also appreciated that they could attend the occasion mask-free. "It's amazing. You feel freed," said Christian Gelacio of Chalan Kanoa; other individuals throughout the event echoed the same sentiment.

The Taste of the Marianas was also a great platform to promote new businesses and restaurants. Tbar is one such business. The café in Garapan had its first appearance at the Taste of Marianas this year.

"We've always just been there at the café and we've had our popularity there, but we've never gotten the chance to expand to big event like Taste of the Marianas; and since we had Taste last weekend we actually had new faces come into the café, so it's a great way to build that relationship with our customers and get a lot more people coming," said Kristan Razon Isip of TBar.

Various food competitions, held at the venue also piqued the interest of many. One competition featured Japan's Sachiyo Masubuchi. Masubuchi won first place and $500 for finishing a 5-lb sukiyaki dish within the whopping time of nine minutes and 25 seconds. Second-place winner George Cabrera got $250 and Nilo Jr. Dino placed third and got $150. Regino Ben in fourth place took home $100. Other competitions that took place during the event included the Kadun Pika, and Eskabeche contests.

This year's Taste of the Marianas took place on the weekend of June 17, 18, and 19, and on June 24, 25, and 26, 2022.

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'$100K needed to maintain public cemetery in Marpi'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With the Tanapag cemetery already full, the Department of Public Lands and Natural Resources will need to open the Marpi public cemetery already by next fiscal year, according to DLNR Secretary Anthony Benavente last week.

Speaking at the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee's hearing on DLNR's budget last Wednesday, Benavente estimated they need $100,000 in all to open the Marpi public cemetery.

Benavente

He said that DLNR's Parks and Recreation is obligated to handle the maintenance of that cemetery.

"We are looking at opening that public Marpi cemetery. We need to start that. It's very important and the maintenance of that public cemetery is critical," he said.

He said there is an added cost in terms of maintenance and upkeeping.

In response to a question of Ways and Means Committee chair Rep. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), Benavente said that Parks and Recreation needs $100,000 for the cemetery project.

Benavente said presently, there are 2,500 existing graves at that public cemetery that remain unused and that another 2,500 will be built, for a total of 5,000 graves that will be available to the public.

"So that's in the work right now," said Benavente, adding that the Division of Fish and Wildlife has cleared the other land area of the cemetery.

He said if he is not mistaken, $1 million has already been set aside for that construction of the additional 2,500 graves.

Benavente said it's time to start using the existing 2,500 graves they've been lying idle.

DLNR submitted a total budget request of $3.9 million for the upcoming fiscal year. Of that amount, approximately $3.1 million is proposed for a total of 101 positions. In addition, DLNR requested $783,000 for operations and $7,000 for utility.

However, the governor's proposal allocates $2.13 million and 93 personnel for personnel.

"This computes a shortfall of $1.76 million," Manglona said.

Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig that there will be a revised budget submission on July 1, which shall include additional funding for operations.

Tinian Mayor Aldan seeks re-election

» Goals include creating alternative energy community, zero waste management program

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Tinian and Aguiguan Mayor Edwin P. Aldan said over the weekend that he is seeking re-election under the Republican Party in the Nov. 8, 2022 general election to ensure the municipality's continued progress.

Aldan

In response to *Saipan Tribune*'s inquiry about his re-election plans, Aldan said his ambitious goals include creating a highly functioning alternative energy community and developing a zero-waste management program. The mayor said he also wants to develop new industries to rebuild Tinian's local economy.

Aldan underscored the need to strengthen the municipality's partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense and other federal agencies to rebuild the island's infrastructure and provide employment and business opportunities for local businesses.

The mayor said he always put Tinian's people first and continues to fight every day for what they deserve. "There are many great things that are anticipated to come for the municipality," he said.

Aldan was first elected as mayor in November 2018. He recalled that the beginning of his term was very challenging because Super Typhoon Yutu had just literally devastated Tinian weeks prior to the election.

He said he faced enormous challenges and pushed through during the most trying time.

It is not clear yet whether Aldan will be running unopposed in this election.

VALIANT SHIELD 2022

TINIAN—Marines, assigned to 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, and sailors, from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 5, integrate to conduct a beach assault and airfield damage repair exercise in support of Valiant Shield 2022.

U.S. NAVY/LT. TYLER BALDINO

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Emergency response training for child care providers

Eight participants from a child care center on Saipan participated in a two-hour emergency and hazard prevention and response training sessions last June 18, 2022, at the Evergreen Learning Training Center in Chalan Kanoa.

The trainings, conducted by Evergreen Learning's quality care specialist Maricar I. Pena, explored prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions and handling and storage of hazardous materials and appropriate disposal of bio-contaminants.

During the session on prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions, participants explored how infectious diseases are spread, handwashing policies and procedures for children and staff, and the differences between cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.

While attending the afternoon session on handling and storage of hazardous materials and appropriate disposal of bio-contaminants, participants were able to identify hazardous materials and biological contaminants, explore why young children are vulnerable to these dangers, and the strategies for properly handling and storing hazardous materials.

The Child Care Reauthorization Act of 2014 requires that all Child Care Development Fund Program child care providers must complete preservice training requirements in 12 health and safety topic areas before they are allowed to be left alone to supervise young children. The topics of prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions and handling and storage of hazardous materials and appropriate disposal of bio-contaminants meet two out of the 12 required trainings. ***(PR)***

Eight participants from a child care center on Saipan participate in two-hour training sessions last June 18, 2022.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PUA

From Page 1

means there is still hope for some PUA applicants who have yet to receive their benefits.

Speaking at the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee's hearing on Labor's budget for fiscal year 2023, Benavente said that under the new extension, they are mandated by U.S. Labor to finish the PUA program by June 2023, or a year from now.

Each week, Benavente said, they are administering over $1 million in benefits starting from the closure of PUA back in in 2021. Through today, they have about $400,000 that are still being dispersed every week to PUA applicants who have just turned in documents or completed the submission of certain requirements for their benefits.

She said that about 1,900 applicants are still waiting to receive some PUA benefits but they are being blocked because they may have an issue with their original applications.

She said the issues include overpayment or missing document, or an investigation has been started because of inaccurate or something that's wrong with their application. "So basically, we're still administering benefits to a few more applicants," Benavente said.

As of Jan. 15, 2022, unemployed individuals in the Marianas have received $261 million from PUA and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance programs that Congress created under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act.

In August 2021, Benavente disclosed that they have traced $31.3 million overpayments in PUA, FPUC, and Lost Wages Assistance, and collected $28 million from such overpayments.

TRIP

From Page 1

accommodate the MVA's and the CNMI government's Tourism Resumption Investment Plan, or TRIP, program for Japan.

Iakopo explained that through the TRIP Japan program, MVA issued request for proposals for airlines to service the Japan-Saipan route and United Airlines was the only airline that submitted a bid.

"We started off with TRIP Korea and the only reason why was because they were the country that was ready for travel. We wanted to respect Japan's government in regards to starting travel, and recently we were told that a lot of the restrictions were lifted. There's still some, but they're working on it. But that didn't stop us. We know that tourism is our own economic driver and we wanted to make sure that we continue. So what we did was we built a plan for TRIP—we call it TRIP Japan—so whenever Japan was ready, that was when we would implement it. So we issued out a request for proposal for any airline who would want to provide direct service from Japan to Saipan. We were thankful enough to receive one proposal, which was United Airlines. So upon extensively reviewing the proposal received, we awarded them and the first flight that will be coming in the first inaugural flight will be on Sept. 1," she said.

"Thank you to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres for really assisting MVA, especially in regard to the funding. This is all under our TRIP program," Iakopo added.

As for the flight schedule, Iakopo said United Airlines will be starting off with three weekly flights.

"As we look into the load factors, we will communicate with United Airlines for potential additional increases in flights. So to start, on a weekly basis, we'll see almost 500 tourists starting September," she said.

Iakopo said MVA is extremely excited to be welcoming back Japanese tourists.

"Having to welcome our Japan market once again is truly important because tourism was borne out of the Japanese so we value that partnership and that friendship and we definitely want to maintain that," she said.

Iakopo explained that TRIP Japan has been in the works for some time now but, due to many factors, it took a while to launch. However, thanks to TRIP Korea, MVA has made the necessary improvements to the program and now, Iakopo said, MVA is gearing up to welcome back its Japanese partners.

"We are right on track to recovery. With the success of TRIP Korea and the travel bubble, that really showed us and taught us the things that we need to improve on as a destination and we obviously know that we cannot rely on one market. The reason why we're starting in Sept. 1 is because, as we learned from Korea, we wanted to give our partners in Japan adequate time to sell Saipan as a destination. So with this announcement, we are working hand in hand with our partners to promote and advertise our destination," Iakopo said.

IPI

From Page 1

said it is close to finalizing a settlement agreement with the Commonwealth Casino Commission, which would see the regulator drop efforts to revoke the company's casino license.

The CCC had been looking to revoke IPI's license for failure to comply with certain requirements under its license agreement, including failure to pay its annual US$15.5 million license fee in August 2020, failure to pay its annual US$3.1 million regulatory fee in October 2020, failure to contribute US$20 million to the community benefit fund in both 2018 and 2019, failure to comply with its minimum US$2 billion capital requirement and failure to comply with a CCC order to pay all money owing to its vendors.

The regulator suspended IPI's license in April 2021; however, IPI has argued that it should not be required to pay its annual license fees because it has been unable to operate Imperial Palace Saipan since March 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which it says constitutes a *force majeure*.

On Friday, IPI said it was now "in the process of finalizing the settlement terms through a settlement agreement" with the CCC.

"The Agreement is expected to be signed by the end of June 2022 and IPI is actively planning, under CCC's guidance, for reopening by November 2022."

It also claims to have engaged "major global construction companies, consulting firms, design and engineering firms as well as local sub-contractors" to complete construction work on its Saipan casino resort, which has already missed a series of construction deadlines in recent years. As of Dec. 31, 2021, IPI had invested US$914 million into the property's development, it said.

IPI also revealed last week that it has signed agreements with two independent third parties to lease a majority of its hotel rooms and villas, and to set up a shopping mall at Imperial Palace Saipan.

"Once the travel restrictions [on] Saipan are lifted, the casino in Imperial Palace Saipan shall resume operations and be opened to public," IPI said. "We expect the successional opening of villas and hotel rooms of Imperial Palace Saipan, subject to the lifting of the global travel restrictions, will enhance our capacity to welcome visitors to Saipan."

See original article at https://www.asgam.com/index.php/2022/06/27/imperial-palace-planning-to-reopen-saipan-casino-in-november/

USDOL

From Page 1

to employees hired under the H-2B program.

"[IPI has] made the payments required under the previous judgment and amendments. However, based on these violations, defendants are again in contempt of the court's injunction against violations of the FLSA. To address these FLSA violations and purge their contempt, defendants enter into this second amended consent judgment," the amended consent judgment states.

The court will have to first approve that consent judgment. If approved, IPI will pay $2,195,726.01 to USDOL. Of that amount, $1,010,416.04 will be payment for back wages of the affected workers and, pursuant to the authority expressly provided in Section 16 of the FLSA, IPI must pay an additional equal amount of $1,010,416.04 as liquidated damages, and an additional amount of$174,893.93 as civil monetary penalties.

According to the initial consent judgment that was approved by the court back in April 2019, IPI was required to make payments for unpaid minimum wage and overtime premiums pursuant to the FLSA.

Back on April 11, 2019, USDOL, IPI, and its mother company, IPI Holdings Ltd., entered into a consent judgment related to alleged labor violations at the IPI construction site.

IPI first violated the consent judgment on Dec. 1, 2019, when it failed to pay USDOL $1,020,000.

In May 2020, USDOL discovered that IPI was not meeting its payroll obligations and was not in compliance with the judgment's prohibition against violating the FLSA.

After unsuccessfully making every effort to secure IPI's compliance with the judgment, on Dec. 16, 2020, USDOL filed a petition for contempt because IPI failed to meet payroll obligations, required employees to work without pay, failed to provide payments to the Secretary of Labor, and other requirements per the 2019 consent judgment.

On Jan. 21, 2021, a hearing was held on USDOL's contempt petition and, based on the evidence presented by USDOL, the court found the defendants in contempt of court for the continuous violation of the 2019 consent judgment by failing to make the scheduled payments and by violating the FLSA.

In a follow-up hearing on Jan. 28, 2021, IPI reported that it satisfied a portion of the consent judgment, including paying $788,022.54 and any other wages due to current IPI employees and restoring employee housing to habitable conditions.

The court ordered on Jan. 28 that IPI satisfy the remaining portion of the judgment by March 1 or the court may proceed with the appointment of a receiver to immediately begin liquidating IPI's assets to fulfill payment.

SSHS JLAB team places within Top 10 at nationals

Saipan Southern High School's JROTC JLAB Leadership Team competed at the 2022 Army Leadership Bowl National Championships in Washington, D.C. on June 19-22, and placed in the Top 9, besting over 40 other schools.

The team also received the Col. Carlos R. Glover "Mega Hooah" Esprit de Corps Award, which means the JLAB cadets have already received this award twice—at the first ever JLAB Leadership award and this time at the fifth—giving them two Esprit de Corps awards already. The Esprit de Corps is an award given to the team that shows a huge effort in teamwork, a great showcase of spirit, and positivity within their team and the people around them.

The JROTC award winning cadets are cadet Maj. Mechaella de Ramos, cadet Capt. Danielle Formalejo, cadet 1SG John Lloyd Tuquero, and cadet MSG Matz Catinding.

The JLAB team also won first place in the H.O.T (High Order Thinking) Leadership category topic. They succeeded at being at 1% of all JLAB Leadership teams competing against them on championship day, June 20, 2022, which took place in the campus of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Southern High School's JROTC JLAB Leadership Team place in the Top 9 at the 2022 Army Leadership Bowl National Championships in Washington, D.C. on June 19-22.

"[It was a] once-in-a-lifetime experience that you shouldn't miss out on. I am really surprised that we got Top 10 but we deserve it after more than nine months of studying," said Catinding.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Southern High School's JROTC JLAB Leadership Team and their chaperone and CSM (Ret.) Richard Basa, the Manta Ray Battalion's Senior Army Instructor, pose for a photo up with Delegate Gregorio Kilili Sablan.

The cadets have been preparing for months before they took off for the championships and are all pleased about not just placing Top 10 out of 40 schools but also managing to win the Esprit de Corps Award once again.

When asked what was the hardest part of the competition, Tuquero said, "Getting into the mindset of winning was hard."

Although the team may have had their doubts throughout the competition, they were confident enough to be able to enter the Top 10. As challenging the past few months of countless hours of studying, hard work, and time management had been, and all the obstacles they went through throughout their preparation, they were able to overcome their struggles by being winners once more.

CSM (Ret.) Richard Basa, the Manta Ray Battalion's Senior Army instructor, said the Saipan Southern High School JLAB Leadership Team performed superbly and he thanked Mark Pratt and Antoine Hanes from the 8th Brigade Headquarters, and Emily Donahue from the College Options Foundation for their support, as well as Delegate Gregorio Kilili Sablan and his staff for the tour of the U.S. Capitol.

Basa also acknowledged the support of the SSHS administrators—SSHS principal Vince Dela Cruz, vice principal Arisa Sakai-Peters, and Mona Maratita— as the team prepared for the competition. Basa also thanked Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred Ada, and associate commissioners Eric Magofna and Yvonne Pangelinan.

He also thanked the team's local fans from the Washington, D.C. area, Mary Ann Cabrera Sablan, and her son, Luke, and Nicole Sablan for their support as well. The JLAB Team also thanked their sponsor, Mel Mendiola, CWM Travel for providing their JLAB Team T-shirts for the competition.

Basa also extended his appreciation to the cadets, their parents, and the team's chaperon, Genelin Camacho, for their continuous support throughout the trip. ***(PR)***

ANTONIO SN. BORJA, Chairman | JAMES M. MENDIOLA, Vice Chairman | HENRY H. SAN NICOLAS, Member | DONALD M. HOFSCHNEIDER, Acting Executive Director

TINIAN CASINO GAMING CONTROL COMMISSION
Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT
(AMENDED)

No.: 2022-01(a)

It is the policy of the Tinan Casino Gaming Control Commission that the personnel system shall be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution, and the Federal Civil Rights Laws regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

Position Title: Executive Director
Opening Date: 06/28/2022 **Extend Closing Date:** 07/12/2022
Salary: $55,000.00 - $65,000.00 per annum **Pay Level:** Ungraded
Location: Tinian Casino Gaming Control Commission, P.O. Box 520143 Tinian, MP 96952 USA

Duties: Serves as Chief Administrative Officer for the staff of the Gaming Commission. Responsible for maintaining efficient operations, for the Gaming Commission. Ensures that the Gaming Commission fulfill its mandate, pursuant to the Revised Tinian Casino Gaming Control Act of 1989. Responsible for recruiting staff members for the TCGCC. Develops administrative procedures, and applicable internal controls. Initiates investigations of applicants for casino licenses, and other applicable licenses. Makes recommendations to the members of the Commission based on the findings of due diligence reports. Prepares annual performance report for the Gaming Commission. Reviews and finalizes the financial reports of the Gaming Commission's activities. Performs other duties as specified in the Revised Tinian Casino Gaming Control Act of 1989, and pursuant to the advice of the Commission.

Qualifications: A combination equivalent to a degree from an accredited college or university, in public administration, business administration or related fields, and at least five (5) years of substantial experience in administrative office management and staff supervision, either the public or with the private sector. Experience in personnel management, fiscal management, procurement and supply, contract negotiation, and other managerial skills, will also be taken into consideration. Applicant must pass the required pre-employment drug testing and other applicable standards, pursuant to the TCGCC Personnel Rules and Regulations.

Special Conditions of Employment: Employment will be undertaken pursuant to TCGCC Personnel Regulations, including but not limited to, Sub-Section 170-30.5-235 which states that "There are special conditions and standards of employment which are considered implicit to successful performance in certain positions". These include, the availability to perform work during non-standard working hours, the requirement to officially travel, as deemed necessary by the TCGCC, and other related duties.

INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS MAY OBTAIN AN APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT, AT THE TCGCC'S MAIN OFFICE IN TINIAN. THE COMPLETED APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT, AND ALL REVELANT DOCUMENTS WHICH INCLUDES, BUT NOT LIMITED TO A RESUME, SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND/OR OTHER RELEVANT EDUCATION TRANSCRIPTS, AND A POLICE CLEARANCE, MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE PERSONNEL SPECIALIST AT THE TCGCC'S MAIN OFFICE DURING THE SPECIFIED OPENING AND CLOSING DATE OF THE POSITION.

NOTE: TCGCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO EXTEND OR CANCEL THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, WITH OR WITHOUT CAUSE.

JOB VACANCY ANNOUCEMENT

Accountant – ACE2022-01
Saipan, CNMI

Two (2) Accountants, Ace Professional Corporation, Saipan, CNMI

Consolidate and Prepares company monthly departmental Financial Statements and clients compilation of financial statements in conformity with general accepted accounting principle (GAAP) acceptable to United States, prepare company budget and monitoring budget versus actual expenses. Performs General Ledger posting, reconciliation, prepare balance sheet schedule on a monthly basis, such as preparation of Fixed assets lapsing schedule, pre-payments, accruals of expenses. Review and compiles Financial Statements for various individual and corporate clients in conformity with auditors requirements. Review and in-charge in the calculation of CNMI and federal government taxes on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Review and or prepares individual and corporate income tax returns for the Company and clients. Responds to CNMI Revenue and IRS letters and prepares necessary documents needed to correct and to comply with tax filing. Prepares recommendations to the top management, with regards to meeting company budget, cost cutting measures, and help in the implementation of company set policies. Report the company's result of operations to the Board of Directors.

Minimum Requirements: Bachelor's degree in Business, Accounting, Finance, or related field, foreign educational equivalent accepted, plus 12 months experience in general accounting and with Knowledge in Peachtree Accounting Software, Peachtree Accounting Payroll, Non-profit Financial Accounting, CNMI and Federal Tax.

Salary: $ 15.29 per hour.

Workplace: CDA Building 3rd Floor Unit#309 Beach Road San Jose, Saipan CNMI.

To apply: To apply: Please send your resume to Ace Professional Corporatipon, PO BOX 500507, Saipan, MP 96950 or e-mail to psgacepc@gmail.com Job Number – **ACE2022-01**

Army Guard troops risk dismissal as vaccine deadline looms

WASHINGTON (AP)—Up to 40,000 Army National Guard soldiers across the country—or about 13% of the force—have not yet gotten the mandated COVID-19 vaccine, and as the deadline for shots looms, at least 14,000 of them have flatly refused and could be forced out of the service.

Guard soldiers have until Thursday to get the vaccine. According to data obtained by The Associated Press, between 20% to 30% of the Guard soldiers in six states are not vaccinated, and more than 10% in 43 other states still need shots.

Guard leaders say states are doing all they can to encourage soldiers to get vaccinated by the time limit. And they said they will work with the roughly 7,000 who have sought exemptions, which are almost all for religious reasons.

"We're going to give every soldier every opportunity to get vaccinated and continue their military career. Every soldier that is pending an exemption, we will continue to support them through their process," said Lt. Gen. Jon Jensen, director of the Army National Guard, in an Associated Press interview. "We're not giving up on anybody until the separation paperwork is signed and completed. There's still time."

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin last year ordered all service members—active-duty, National Guard and Reserves—to get the vaccine, saying it is critical to maintaining the health and readiness of the force. The military services had varying deadlines for their forces, and the Army National Guard was given the longest amount of time to get the shots, mainly because it's a large force of about 330,000 soldiers who are widely scattered around the country, many in remote locations.

The Army Guard's vaccine percentage is the lowest among the U.S. military—with all the active-duty Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps at 97% or greater and the Air Guard at about 94%. The Army reported Friday that 90% of Army Reserve forces were partially or completely vaccinated.

The Pentagon has said that after June 30, Guard members won't be paid by the federal government when they are activated on federal status, which includes their monthly drill weekends and their two-week annual training period. Guard troops mobilized on federal status and assigned to the southern border or on COVID-19 missions in various states also would have to be vaccinated or they would not be allowed to participate or be paid.

U.S. NAVY/MCS3 ANGEL THUY JASKULOSKI

File photo shows Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins, from Evans, Georgia, receiving a COVID-19 vaccine at the McCormick Gym onboard Naval Station Norfolk, April 8, 2021.

To make it more complicated, however, Guard soldiers on state activate duty may not have to be vaccinated—based on the requirements in their states. As long as they remain in state duty status, they can be paid by the state and used for state missions.

At least seven governors formally asked Austin to reconsider or not enforce the vaccine mandate for National Guard members, and some filed or signed on to lawsuits. In letters to the governors, Austin declined, and said that the coronavirus "takes our service members out of the fight, temporarily or permanently, and jeopardizes our ability to meet mission requirements." He said Guard troops must either get the vaccine or lose their Guard status.

Jensen and Maj. Gen. Jill Faris, director of the Guard's office of the Joint Surgeon General, said they are working with states adjutants general to get progress updates, including on the nearly 20,000 troops who are not flat refusals and haven't submitted any type of exemption request. Some, they said, may just be a lag in self-reporting, while others may still be undecided.

"Part of those undefined are our soldiers who say, well, I have until 30 June and so I'll take till 30 June," said Jensen.

Others may have promised to bring in vaccine paperwork, and haven't done it yet. Still others are on the books, but haven't yet reported to basic training, so don't have to be vaccinated until they get there. It's not clear how many are in each category.

Jensen acknowledged that if the current numbers hold, there are concerns about possible impact on Guard readiness in the states, including whether it will affect any Guard units preparing to deploy.

"When you're looking at, 40,000 soldiers that potentially are in that unvaccinated category, absolutely there's readiness implications on that and concerns associated with that," said Jensen. "That's a significant chunk."

Overall, according to the data obtained by the AP, about 85% of all Army Guard soldiers are fully vaccinated. Officials said that if those with one shot are counted, 87% are at least partially vaccinated.

Across the country, in all but one case, Guard soldiers are vaccinated at a higher rate that the general population in their state. Only in New Jersey is the percentage of vaccinated Guard solders very slightly lower than the state's overall population, as of earlier this month when the data was collected.

The three U.S. territories—Virgin Islands, Guam and Puerto Rico—and the District of Columbia, all have more than 90% of their soldiers fully vaccinated. The highest percentage is in Hawaii, with nearly 97%, while the lowest is Oklahoma, at just under 70%.

Guard leaders in the states have run special shot programs, and provided as much information as possible to their forces in order to keep them on the job.

In Tennessee, they set up small teams in the east, west and central regions and did monthly events providing vaccines to troops who wanted them. And every Wednesday, Guard members could make appointments for shots in the middle Tennessee region, in Smyrna. In addition, in early June they called in all soldiers who have so far refused the vaccine.

"We held a big, mass event," said Army Guard Col. Keith Evans. "We had all of our medical providers here. So if there were any questions to clear up, any misconceptions, any misinformation, we had all of our our data and were able to provide them all the information."

Evans, who is commander of his Army Guard's medical readiness command, said they also had recruiting and other leaders there who could explain what would happen if soldiers chose to not get the shot and ended up leaving the Guard.

"We wanted to let them know what benefits they had earned because these are soldiers that had had done their time, served their country," said Evans.

Officials say they believe the information campaign has been working. Jensen said that about 1,500 soldiers a week around the country are moving into the vaccinated category. "We expect, as we approach the deadline, that we'll see some larger growth."

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-22-034

PROVISION OF OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE, AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR THE POWER GENERATION PLANT SYSTEMS ON THE ISLAND OF TINIAN

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the provision of operations, maintenance, and management services for the Power Plant Systems on the Island of Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of **$200.00** (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-22-034, Operations, Maintenance, and Management Services for The Power Plant Systems on the island of Tinian" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on July 28, 2022** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on July 8, 2022,** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Marcela Tenorio, at email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan at email christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

CHRETIEN T. VOERG
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB22-COTA/FTA-42200120

SUBMISSION DATE: July 28, 2022 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"Purchase and Delivery of Four (4) 8-Passenger High Roof ADA Mobility Equipped Electric Transit Van with One (1) Wheel Chair Position for the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT THE HORIGUCHI BUILDING, GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU, BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN, SAIPAN DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

****FOR YOUR SAFETY & OURS: ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS ARE RECOMMENDED TO USE A FACE MASK & ARE RECOMMENDED TO REGISTER UPON ENTRY****

ALL QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL TO THE COMMONWEALTH OFFICE OF TRANSIT AUTHORITY AT MS. ALFREDA P. CAMACHO VIA EMAIL ONLY TO alfreda.camacho@gov.mp NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, 04:30 P.M., LOCAL TIME, JULY 15, 2022. ALL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SHALL BE SHARED WITH ALL POTENTIAL BIDDERS. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED AFTER THE DEADLINE WILL BE ENTERTAINED.

THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT; BIDDERS ARE REQUIRED TO COMPLY WITH FTA FEDERAL CONTRACT CLAUSES AS APPLICABLE.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ALFREDA P. CAMACHO
S/A FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

COTA awarded $800K for ferry study, transpo master plan

The Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority under the CNMI Office of the Governor was awarded Friday $800,000 in competitive grant funds under the U.S. Department of Transportation: Federal Transit Administration's "The Areas of Persistent Poverty Program" to develop a sustainable transportation master plan and conduct an independent ferry feasibility study for the Northern Mariana Islands.

The 20- year Sustainable Transportation Master Plan will create multi-modal and intra/inter-island transportation options.

In March of 2022, special assistant for Public Transportation Alfreda Camacho Maratita attended the Territorial Climate Infrastructure Workshop and presented to the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation, and regional partners on the CNMI's Built Infrastructure priorities, which include the importance of a sustainable transportation master plan in order to improve the transportation options for the CNMI.

Special assistant for Public Transportation, Alfreda Camacho Maratita is flanked by USDOT- FTA Region IX officials—Bernardo Bustamante, director for the office of Program Management and Project Oversight, and general engineer Ryan Fujii—at the Territorial Climate and Infrastructure Update Presentations last March in Honolulu, Hawaii. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI is in dire need for a complete multi-modal transportation system to support infrastructure and community health outcomes. Currently, travel is limited to monopolized air travel on small flights, which presents connectivity challenges, especially for individuals in need of medical attention. Increased mobility options will provide a pathway to improved wellness, economic outcomes, and enhanced environmental sustainability for the CNMI.

"With this grant award, the CNMI will be able to conduct an interisland, multimodal transportation feasibility study and a sustainable transportation master plan to build [on] the Saipan Walkability Assessment and support the islands of Tinian and Rota with multimodal connectivity planning throughout the CNMI that will include pilot project implementation of renewable charging stations to support electric-vehicles fleet buildout," said Maratita.

"I would like to thank and recognize [Maratita and COTA] for their hard work in securing the grant funds to conduct this feasibility study and develop the transportation master plan. This will go a long way in moving our islands forward, as we continue to improve our public transportation and infrastructure, promoting accessibility and sustainability," said Gov. Ralph DLG Torres. ***(PR)***

NMI's Peter takes part in PASAI meeting

Public Auditor Kina Peter of the CNMI's Office of the Public Auditor participated in the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions' 30th governing board meeting online last June 23, 2022.

A PASAI news release noted that it was the last governing board meeting attended by Peter and the PASAI Secretariat recognized her service.

Sairusi Dukuno, acting auditor-general of Fiji and chair of the PASAI governing board, chaired the meeting.

Peter

PASAI chief executive Esther Lameko-Poutoa reported on the progress of work in achieving the PASAI Strategic Plan 2014–2024 up to May 31, 2022. She focused on activities performed from March to May under each strategic priority area.

The governing board discussed the operational plan for the coming financial year. The plan and its proposed budget were both approved.

Agenda items also included an update on the status of the 23rd PASAI Congress, expected to take place predominantly in-person for the first time in four years, in Palau next February.

The Secretariat expresses its gratitude to the governing board members for their ongoing assistance and acknowledges our development partners for their continued support of PASAI and its work in the region. ***(PR)***

Man accused of sexually abusing minor pleads not guilty

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A man accused of inappropriately touching a minor has pleaded not guilty to the sexual abuse charge filed against him.

Venitus Ruwaath, 41, pleaded not guilty last week to one count of sexual abuse of a minor in the second degree during his arraignment before Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja.

Naraja scheduled Ruwaath's status conference for July 28, at 10am before Superior Court Associate Judge Wesley Bogdan.

Ruwaath was represented by assistant public defender Vina Seelam while Office of the Attorney General Chief Prosecutor Chester Hinds appeared for the government.

According to court documents, the court found probable cause to charge Ruwaath with sexual abuse of a minor in the second degree based on the testimony of a Department of Public Safety detective.

The complaint filed against Ruwaath stated that police received a walk-in complaint of a sexual abuse of a minor case on March 27, made by the victim's father.

During a forensic interview with the minor, the victim told authorities that the incident happened sometime in June 2020. The minor said she was in bed watching YouTube videos when the defendant came in and asked what she was doing before he started touching her inappropriately.

At a bail hearing last June 3, the court imposed a $20,000 cash bail on Ruwaath and remanded him to the custody of the Department of Corrections.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP22-CHCC/THC-020

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:JULY 25th, 2022 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

Design Services for Tinian Health Center (THC) Generator Replacement

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

JOB VACANCY ANNOUCEMENT

Cafeteria Workers (Supervisor) – BP2022-01
Saipan, CNMI

Four (4) Cafeteria Workers (Supervisor),
Allied Construction Corporation dba: Barny's Pizza., Saipan, CNMI

Supervise daily cafeteria operation which includes being the head cashier, making sure that the contractual obligations and standards are being met. Supervisor will also be the HACCP head of the service location. Monitor performances of service staff and coordination with the school administration, staff teacher and parents. The supervisor will also be in charge of inventory and supplies requisition, see to it that maintenance of cafeteria and surroundings is clean and sanitized condition at all times. Ensure that the food is of the highest quality possible, and that food is stored in a safe and sanitary manner. Answer student and teacher complaints. Report any shortages to the person in charge of ordering or in some cases, requisition them yourself.

Minimum Requirements: High School Graduate, plus 12 months experience in operation with food preparation and serving a minimum of 500 capacity.

Salary: $ 9.59 per hour.

Workplace: TEXAS ROAD, BARNYS PIZZA BUILDING Susupe Village Saipan, CNMI.

To apply: Please send your resume to Barny's Pizza, PMB 55 Box 10001, Saipan, MP 96950 or e-mail to **alliedspn@gmail.com** Job Number – **BP2022-01**

JOB VACANCY ANNOUCEMENT

General Manager – HS2022-01
Tinian, CNMI

General Manager, HUANG SHUN CORPORATION - Tinian, CNMI.

Responsible in the overall management of Hotel, Bar & Restaurant, Retail Store, Wholesale, Poker Gameroom, Farming, and other business operation. Review financial statements, sales or activity reports, or other performance data to measure productivity or goal achievement or to identify areas needing cost reduction or program improvement. Direct and coordinate activities of businesses or departments concerned with the production, pricing, sales, or distribution of products. Direct administrative activities directly related to making products or providing services. Prepare staff work schedules and assign specific duties. Monitor suppliers to ensure that they efficiently and effectively provide needed goods or services within budgetary limits. Direct or coordinate financial or budget activities to fund operations, maximize investments, or increase efficiency. Establish or implement departmental policies, goals, objectives, or procedures in conjunction with board members, organization officials, or staff members. Perform personnel functions such as selection, training, or evaluation. Plan or direct activities such as sales promotions that require coordination with other department managers. Set prices or credit terms for goods or services based on forecasts of customer demand. Manage the movement of goods into and out of production facilities to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, or sustainability of operations. Perform sales floor work, such as greeting or assisting customers, stocking shelves, or taking inventory.n Develop or implement product-marketing strategies, including advertising
campaigns or sales promotions. Recommend locations for new facilities or oversee the remodeling or renovating of current facilities. Implement or oversee environmental management or sustainability programs addressing issues such as recycling, conservation, or waste management. Direct non-merchandising departments of businesses, such as advertising or purchasing.

Minimum Requirements: High School Graduate, foreign educational equivalent accepted, plus 24 months experience in general operation. Able to manage multiple businesses such as retail store, gameroom poker, rental properties, farming and manufacturing.

Salary: $ 21.00 per hour.

Workplace: U-Save Market Building, Lot #014 T 22, San Jose Village, Tinian 96952 CNMI

To apply: Please send your resume to Huang Shun Corporation, PO BOX 520335, Tinian, MP 96952 or e-mail to tinianpoz@hotmail.com Job Advertisement Number – HS2022-01

Opinion

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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

With Roe decision, Supreme Court sneers at precedent—and places women's health in jeopardy

The inescapable fallacy that hangs like an albatross around the neck of the antiabortion movement is the misguided assumption that women will stop terminating their pregnancies if the procedure becomes illegal. America has been there, done that.

Abortion was illegal in this country before the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, yet millions of abortions were being performed. One quantitative analysis estimated up to 1.2 million illegal abortions were performed annually before Roe.

So, what should we expect now that Roe has been overturned by a Republican-packed Supreme Court so drunk with power that it treated the 50-year-old precedent like a piece of stale bread to be tossed out like garbage? Legal or not, abortions will continue. But just as it was 50 years ago, many will be unsafe and harm women.

Making the court's decision Friday even more egregious was the eager participation of Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, who in their Senate confirmation hearings said Roe should be upheld under the court's doctrine of stare decisis, which means the court stands by what it previously decided. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused the justices of lying.

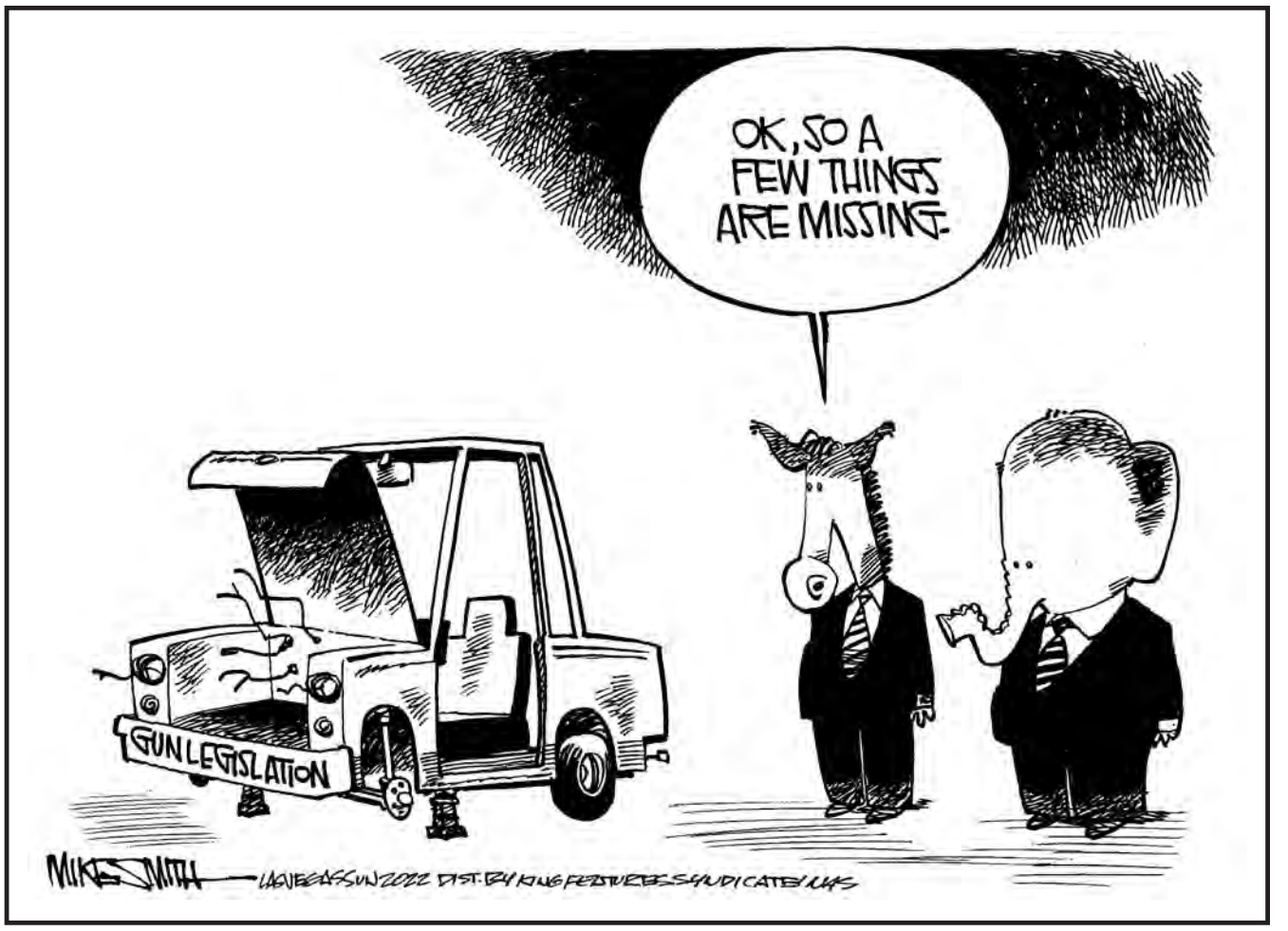
"Today, the Republican-controlled Supreme Court has achieved their dark, extreme goal of ripping away women's right to make their own reproductive health decisions," she said. "Because of Donald Trump, Mitch McConnell, the Republican Party, and their supermajority on the Supreme Court, American women today have less freedom than their mothers."

Just as disappointing was Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., who earlier suggested he preferred leaving Roe intact while upholding the more restrictive Mississippi abortion law that was before the court. If Roberts didn't agree with his fellow conservatives, he should have voted with dissenting Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan. Apparently, that would have taken more bravery than he could muster.

This court has thumbed its nose at every Supreme Court that preceded it and upheld Roe. "Roe was egregiously wrong from the start. Its reasoning was exceptionally weak, and the decision has had damaging consequences," the court said in its majority opinion, which was written by Justice Samuel Alito. That's sheer arrogance. Alito is suggesting that only the current court was capable of making an appropriate abortion ruling.

In reality, the court's butchery of Roe has opened the door for similar assaults on other rights whose constitutionality

See ROE on Next Page



America's Constitution is conservative, like it or not

By RAMESH PONNURU
Bloomberg Opinion

Ramesh Ponnuru is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist. He is the editor of National Review and a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.*

Conservatives are, by and large, thrilled by the Supreme Court's recent decisions. It has expanded its conception of gun rights that states have to respect, and ruled that states have to include religious schools in voucher programs. It has also allowed states to ban abortion. All of this before the court has even ended its current term.

We conservatives say that we favor these decisions not just because we favor the policy outcomes, but because they were right on the law. They reflect the text of the Constitution as its provisions were originally understood by the ratifying public.

We go on to say, typically, that a conscientious judge should not make rulings about the law with their policy preferences in mind. They should not, that is, confuse what the law says with what they think it should say.

It has not escaped the notice of progressives, though, that conservative legal decisions and conservative policy victories often go hand in hand. It is a pattern that makes them think that conservatives are lying, maybe even to themselves, when they boast about their "neutral" judicial methodology. The conservatives on the court are acting, they say, like conservative politicians who happen to be wearing robes. They are advancing conservative policy goals while putting progressive ones further out of reach.

It is surely true that conservatives' views about what the law should say influence their views about what it does say. Legal philosophies of originalism and textualism do not build an impregnable barrier between the two. But there is also a less embarrassing reason that legal conservatism so often lines up with political conservatism: The US Constitution itself is conservative.

What I mean is not that the Constitution requires the implementation of every sentence of the latest Republican platform or blocks everything in the Democratic one. The Constitution, on any reasonable reading, is clearly compatible with a lot of liberal political victories. But it also, much of the time, pushes in a direction that contemporary conservatives find more congenial than liberals.

Other countries' constitutions include long lists of positive rights that entitle citizens to welfare assistance from the government. Ours doesn't. The Constitution's structural elements—especially the multiple veto points it creates at the federal level – further constrain federal activism.

At the same time, the Constitution, going strictly by its text and the original understanding of its provisions, leaves states with enormous leeway to impose laws regulating morality. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the Supreme Court's decisions on guns and abortion, it is impossible to dispute that the Constitution explicitly protects a right to keep and bear arms and does not have equivalent language about abortion.

The Electoral College and the Senate give rural voters more power than they would have in a pure national democracy. The Constitution's preoccupations, too, are more conservative than progressive: It's written with obvious concern for the preservation of property rights and freedom of contract, and with no obvious concern for sexual freedom.

These characteristics of our constitutional order don't always favor conservatives: Once a liberal federal program has been enacted, for example, the multiple veto points protect it from abolition. But the general tendency is to favor conservatives over progressives, at least as these terms have been understood for the last century.

What's more, everyone, to some degree, already understands this. The conservatism of our Constitution is why people on the right are more likely to call themselves "constitutional conservatives" than people on the left are to call themselves "constitutional progressives."

It's why progressives are much more likely than conservatives to describe the Constitution as fatally flawed or outmoded, and have been at least since Woodrow Wilson's time. It's why, when conservatives seek to amend the Constitution, it is typically to restore an element of the original understanding of it.

And it's why liberals have been attracted to methods of constitutional interpretation that give them free rein to change the meaning of provisions so as, for example, to accord with "evolving standards of decency." Even if conservatives and liberals on the bench were just as avid to reach the policy results they favor, the conservatives would not have to resort to such interpretive methods as much as the liberals do.

Conservatives flock to originalism not just because, in the abstract, it sounds like a compelling account of how laws should be read. They like it because, more than liberals, they generally approve of the Constitution as its provisions were originally understood.

A pious respect for the Founders plays a role in conservative thinking, too. But we might better understand the debates about court decisions and the dueling judicial philosophies underlying them if we recognized that conservatives and progressives have different attitudes toward the Constitution—and that these attitudes are perfectly rational given what each group wants out of government and politics.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

My first love

The following is the first-place winner in the My Marianas Writing Contest of the Northern Marianas Humanities Council. It is being reprinted here at the request if the council.

By ALEIA HOFSCHNEIDER SANTOS
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

I was born on Jan. 15, 2004, and was raised on the island of Tinian until I was about 4 years old. My family relocated to the U.S. in June 2008 to wait out my Dad's second deployment, this time to Kuwait. My Dad, however, returned from active duty due to injuries he'd incurred on his first deployment to Iraq that ended in January 2006. The shift between sunshine-soaked days spent splashing in the waters of Tachokña to the unforgiving precipitation of the Pacific Northwest was abrupt and confusing to my barely developed brain—but there was one thing that kept my freshly doknos head above the cloud cover: my first love.

Before the dawn of preheated, processed, and packaged school food, my Grandma Andresina was the backbone of the school breakfast and lunch program on Tinian. I like to think that her years of scavenging for food for her family in Yap during World War II as an 11-year-old is what sparked her passion for feeding and caring for others. She eventually went on to love, feed, and care for her own family with my grandpa and their 13 kids. Eventually, her family grew to include all the families on Tinian. Everyday she and the other women working put their skills, experience, and hearts together to feed the children of Tinian, with dishes like beef stir fry, Chamorro-style curry, and fish filet, all complete with heaping servings of rice and fresh vegetables. Aside from her work in the cafeteria, she ran a snack mobile that filled the tummies of not just children, but parents and other familia as well. Homemade donuts, ice cup, and titiyas were just a few of the goodies that kept her customers coming back for more everyday—but she could not do it all on her own. Her right-hand woman happened to be my Tita Jovie, who helped my mom care for my siblings and I while my dad served in Iraq. By the time my dad came back, she was no longer an employee, but a member of our family.

It all began around the time my Dad came back. I woke up one morning alone in my parents' bed. I rubbed my eyes with my little fingers as I listened to the clucks of our chickens outside and the erratic pitter patter of their feet. I could hear my parents laughing with Tita Jovie as they always did every morning. I crept out of the room and into the kitchen to see my parents sitting at our wooden table and my Tita Jovie pouring coffee into their mugs. I could hear my parents discussing something in Chamorro, but my eyes were now fixated on what was on the table rather than those sitting around it. A yellow serving bowl filled with the remnants of my Dad's famous fried rice. A plate with sunny side up eggs with crispy, brown edges. A smaller dish with scrambled egg whites with sharp tasting onions and lots of green spinach for my mom. An empty plate that most likely once had freshly cooked Spam, bacon, or sausage on it. Small cups of orange juice and apple juice left behind by my siblings who didn't have the privilege of sleeping in like I did because of school. As I looked at the bounty on the table, my heart sank.

"What do you want to eat, Princess?" asked Tita Jovie. I turned and faced her, watching her carefully sort through the various glass donne jars gifted to my mom. Then I saw it. In the glow of the refrigerator light was my gateway to flavor heaven: a green plastic bowl used for party food. My 4-year-old mind had determined that this bowl was always used for my favorite dish made by my Grandma. My tita, not needing me to say a word, grabbed a spoon, peeled the saran wrap off the top of the bowl, and lifted up a heaping amount. She guided the spoon to my mouth, cupping her other hand below it to prevent any loss of the precious dish. It was the perfect blend of chopped barbecue chicken, the slight sweetness of grated coconut, the sharpness of minced green onions, the sourness of lemon, and of course, the irreplaceable sprinkles of salt, and just a bit of Tinian hot pepper. After just a bite, I erupted into my first lyrical masterpiece. Chicken kelaguen, I lo-o-ove you! Chicken kelaguen, I ne-e-ed you! Chicken kelaguen, I want you! Chicken kelaguen, I lo-o-o-ve you! At the time, I remember receiving a roaring applause from my parents and Tita, but as this tale has been told to my other relatives, I've learned that they actually erupted in laughter—just as those who hear the story do.

As the years went by in the States, my family found solace and joy in making and eating traditional Chamorro dishes like red rice and titiyas, but my Grandma's chicken kelaguen will always be my first love. It was hard to find the best ingredients for our meals in stores like Walmart or Fred Meyer, but we eventually found havens like Ocean King Market or Uwajimaya hidden throughout Washington and Oregon. We shared our kamyu and grill with my aunties and uncles and rationed our donne as much as we could to ensure that we could enjoy our favorite Chamorro dishes together. After my original performance as a 4-year-old, I was naturally made the executive taste tester of the chicken kelaguen made by my family for parties. I devoured a plate of chicken kelaguen every chance I could get at family gatherings, weddings, and birthday parties. As I entered my teen years, I eventually inherited the role of making it with their help. The soreness in my legs that I feel after crouching on the kamyu and grinding the coconut, the tears in my eyes from the smoke of the chicken barbecued by my Dad, the burning of my nostrils as I handle the hot pepper expertly selected by my Mom—are all tests that I withstand by imagining the immaculate taste of the final product. There is no sound as joyous as the laughter of my siblings and I share as we simultaneously chat, debone, and chop the chicken expertly barbecued by my Dad. There is no feeling more satisfying than successfully grinding the coconut and mincing the green onions. There is no opportunity that I am more grateful for than adding the lemon, hot pepper, and sprinkle of salt as we mix the ingredients together with my Mom by side. As the years have gone by, I've realized that there is no dish without having my family members there with me. Whether we're chilling in the Pacific Northwest, or tanning in the CNMI, when we make and eat chicken kelaguen together, we're home. Chicken kelaguen, I love you!

Overturning Roe v. Wade accelerates a return to a dark time in American history

Even though I'm a woman of childbearing age, I've been privileged enough to never have had to deal with the prospect of an unwanted pregnancy or the choice of whether to carry a pregnancy to term.

But as news of the Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade spread across the country, I found myself returning to a movie I watched my freshman year of college.

By JORIE GOINS
Chicago Tribune

Jorie Goins is a content editor who works with the Tribune Editorial Board.

The film was "The Crime of Father Amaro" (or to use its Spanish-language title, "El Crimen del Padre Amaro"). It stars Gael Garcia Bernal and Ana Claudia Talancon and is based on the Portuguese story "O Crime do Padre Amaro" by José Maria de Eca de Queirós. Bernal plays Padre Amaro, a young priest who begins an illicit sexual relationship with the teenage Amelia, despite his vow of chastity. The relationship leads to a pregnancy, and Amelia ultimately dies after hemorrhaging during an illegal abortion.

I saw the film in my Spanish 121 class, in which watching Spanish-language films was a regular part of the curriculum, and it has stayed with me. For years, I couldn't get out of my mind the image of Amelia's ashen face and lifeless body as Amaro frantically drives her to get help. More crucially, I couldn't stop thinking about whether Amelia or any woman in such a situation would have survived if she'd been able to go to a reputable doctor to terminate her pregnancy in peace and safety.

I've never had to weigh the choice of whether to bring a pregnancy to term. It is my hope, especially now, that I don't have to. And I'm not even sure what I would do if I were faced with an unwanted or unexpected pregnancy. Throughout my life, my views on abortion have gone from being extreme, rigid and conservative, to accepting but judgmental.

But today, as a 27-year-old woman, I have no judgment. Today, I'd want to know that I would have a choice in what to do with my body.

More importantly, I would want my friends and loved ones to have the choice too. Without fear, penalty or relinquished safety, from me or anyone else.

I want young girls who aren't ready to be mothers to have the choice.

I want anyone who can get pregnant, whether or not they identify as female, to have a choice over what happens with their bodies.

And I want the right that was cemented in the Roe v. Wade ruling to stand as a federal mandate and not be decided by the states, whose varied responses to the COVID-19 pandemic—and the ensuing case numbers—show what can happen when individual governments are left to their own devices in matters of public health. I'm crushed that the Supreme Court has handed that choice back to states instead of keeping it in our hands, where it belongs.

What's more, the trickle-down effect that this decision represents is even more terrifying than the decision itself. At stake is more than just basic privacy. Overturning Roe v. Wade is, in essence, a slap in the face to the countrywide consensus that ostensibly was at the core of the Civil War—that states should not have the power to dictate people's fundamental right to manage their bodies, their relationships or their lives, as they wish.

We aren't just looking at a return to a pre-1973 America. Instead, I'm afraid, we are staring at a frightening collision of a post-pandemic 21st century, with the horrific antebellum days we thought had been left behind more than a century and a half ago.

Today more than ever before, I wish we'd leave the past, in the past.

ROE

From Page 8

had been considered settled, including affirmative action and gay marriage. Justice Clarence Thomas said in his concurring opinion that those rights, like Roe, are not liberties protected by the due process clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. So, are they next up for the trash heap?

Opportunistic Republicans have exploited the abortion issue for decades to keep evangelical Christians and other abortion foes in their thrall. But their "pro-life" fervor has mostly been a ploy. Otherwise, they would have supported more medical and social programs over the past 50 years that could have helped both women who want to avoid abortion and their children. Instead, they have decried such programs as waste.

The GOP hopes dismantling Roe will help it win elections, starting with the midterms in November. But a recent poll showed 62% of Americans did not want Roe overturned. Even 41% of Republicans said the law should stand. That means the political gain the extremist wing of the party has courted may not occur. The Supreme Court's Roe decision may instead help voters choose candidates who won't ignore their opinion. That's how democracy should work.

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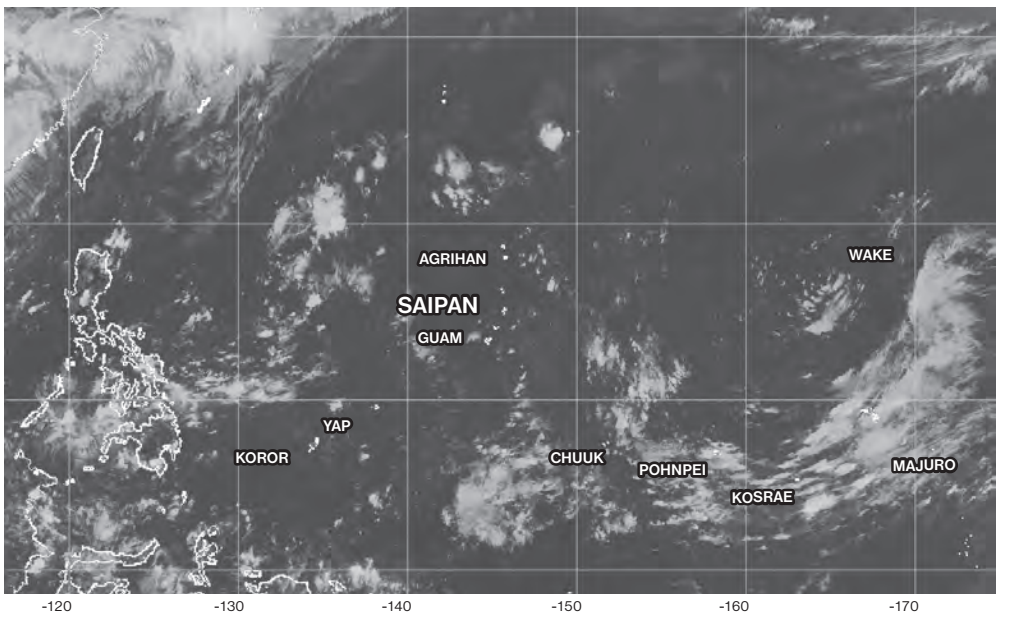
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Isolated showers. Partly sunny	Isolated showers. Partly sunny.	Partly sunny.	Partly sunny.	A chance of showers. Mostly cloudy.
86° 79°	86° 79°	87° 76°	88° 79°	87° 76°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:28 AM, MONDAY, JUNE 27, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows scattered showers moving through the Guam and Rota waters, with isolated showers moving through the Tinian and Saipan waters. The buoys reveal combined seas of 4 to 6 feet composed mainly of east-northeast trade-wind swells.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	87° / 78°
Palau	Thunderstorms	82° / 76°
Yap	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°
Chuuk	Scattered Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	87° / 77°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°
Majuro	Scattered Thunderstorms	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	5:49 AM	6:50 PM
Wednesday	5:49 AM	6:51 PM
Thursday	5:50 AM	6:51 PM
Friday	5:50 AM	6:51 PM
Saturday	5:50 AM	6:51 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	4:46 AM	6:14 PM	-
Wednesday	5:35 AM	7:05 PM	-
Thursday	6:26 AM	7:54 PM	-
Friday	7:18 AM	8:40 PM	-
Saturday	8:10 AM	9:23 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Showers	60° / 51°
Beijing	Thunderstorms	80° / 70°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	89° / 81°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	85° / 74°
London	Partly Cloudy	71° / 57°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	89° / 67°
Manila	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	57° / 44°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	87° / 79°
New York	Thunderstorms	79° / 64°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	91° / 77°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	82° / 63°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	88° / 77°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	97° / 79°
Salem	Isolated Thunderstorms	91° / 72°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	67° / 52°
Seoul	Thunderstorms	79° / 75°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	92° / 78°
Washington, DC	Rain	84° / 61°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
1:25 AM	Low Tide	1.48
5:57 AM	High Tide	1.91
1:35 PM	Low Tide	-0.04
8:58 PM	High Tide	1.93

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:30AM	Daily
UA156	6:30PM	7:15PM	6

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:00AM	8:00AM	Daily
UA193	7:05PM	10:55PM	5 via Palau
UA183	7:10PM	9:10PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:10PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	10:55PM	5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW9308	3:30PM	7:20PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3405	3:30PM	7:25PM	6
RS112	3:45PM	7:30PM	3, 6
7C3405	3:50PM	7:45PM	3
OZ624	4:00PM	7:40PM	3, 6

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3451	2:00PM	5:20PM	7
7C3451	3:00PM	6:20PM	3
BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	3, 7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
UA112	4:40PM	5:30PM	6

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:00PM	4:00AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:25PM	4:25AM+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:25PM	6:15AM+1	5 via Palau
UA184	11:50PM	5:40AM+1	5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

A184/174	10:25PM	8:45AM+1	1,2,3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:25PM	8:45AM+1	5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	11:50PM	8:45AM+1	5 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	8:30AM	2:10PM	6
RS111	8:45AM	2:05PM	3, 6
7C3406	8:50AM	2:30PM	3
TW9307	9:00AM	2:30PM	4, 6, 7
OZ623	9:00AM	2:30PM	3, 6
TW9307	9:15AM	2:30PM	3

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3452	8:00AM	1:00PM	7
BX621	8:00AM	1:10PM	3, 7
7C3452	9:00AM	2:00PM	3

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

EXPLAINER: What's the impact of a Russian debt default?

Russia is poised to default on its foreign debt for the first time since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, further alienating the country from the global financial system following sanctions imposed over its war in Ukraine.

The country faces a Sunday night deadline to meet a 30-day grace period on interest payments originally due May 27. But it could take time to confirm a default.

"While there is a possibility that some magic could occur" and Russia gets the money through financial institutions to bondholders despite sanctions, "nobody's making that bet," said Jay S. Auslander, a top sovereign debt lawyer at the firm of Wilk Auslander in New York. "The overwhelming probability is they won't be able to because no bank is going to move the money."

Last month, the U.S. Treasury Department ended Russia's ability to pay its billions in debt back to international investors through American banks. In response, the Russian Finance Ministry said it would pay dollar-denominated debts in rubles and offer "the opportunity for subsequent conversion into the original currency."

Russia calls any default artificial because it has the money to pay its debts but says sanctions have frozen its foreign currency reserves held abroad.

"There is money and there is also the readiness to pay," Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said last month. "This situation, artificially created by an unfriendly country, will not have any effect on Russians' quality of life."

Tim Ash, senior emerging market sovereign analyst at BlueBay Asset Management, tweeted that the default "is clearly not" beyond Russia's control and that sanctions are preventing it from paying its debts because it invaded Ukraine.

Here are key things to know about a Russian default:

HOW MUCH DOES RUSSIA OWE?

About $40 billion in foreign bonds, about half of that to foreigners. Before the start of the war, Russia had around $640 billion in foreign currency and gold reserves, much of which was held overseas and is now frozen.

Russia has not defaulted on its international debts since the Bolshevik Revolution more than a century ago, when the Russian Empire collapsed and the Soviet Union was created. Russia defaulted on its domestic debts in the late 1990s but was able to recover from that default with the help of international aid.

Investors have expected Russia to default for months. Insurance contracts that cover Russian debt have priced a 80% likelihood of default for weeks, and rating agencies like Standard & Poor's and Moody's have placed the country's debt deep into junk territory.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A COUNTRY IS IN DEFAULT?

Ratings agencies can lower the rating to default or a court can decide the issue. Bondholders who have credit default swaps—contracts that act like insurance policies against default—can ask a committee of financial firm representatives to decide whether a failure to pay debt should trigger a payout, which still isn't a formal declaration of default.

A model displays a creation by Russian designer Igor Chapurin at the fountain "Friendship of Peoples" during the Fashion Week at VDNKh, The Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, June 21, 2022. AP

The Credit Default Determination Committee—an industry group of banks and investment funds—ruled June 7 that Russia had failed to pay required additional interest after making a payment on a bond after the April 4 due date. But the committee put off taking further action due to uncertainty over how sanctions might affect any settlement.

WHAT CAN INVESTORS DO?

The formal way to declare default is if 25% or more of bondholders say they didn't get their money. Once that happens, provisions say all Russia's other foreign bonds are also in default, and bondholders could then seek a court judgment to enforce payment.

In normal circumstances, investors and the defaulting government typically negotiate a settlement in which bondholders are given new bonds that are worth less but that at least give them some partial compensation.

But sanctions bar dealings with Russia's finance ministry. And no one knows when the war will end or how much defaulted bonds could wind up being worth.

In this case, declaring default and suing "might not be the wisest choice," Auslander said. It's not possible to negotiate with Russia and there are so many unknowns, so creditors may decide to "hang tight for now."

Investors who wanted out of Russian debt have probably already headed for the exits, leaving those who may have bought bonds at knocked-down prices in hopes of profiting from a settlement in the long run. And they might want to keep a low profile for a while to avoid being associated with the war.

Once a country defaults, it can be cut off from bond-market borrowing until the default is sorted out and investors regain confidence in the government's ability and willingness to pay. But Russia has already been cut off from Western capital markets, so any return to borrowing is a long way off anyway.

The Kremlin can still borrow rubles at home, where it mostly relies on Russian banks to buy its bonds.

WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S DEFAULT?

Western sanctions over the war have sent foreign companies fleeing from Russia and interrupted the country's trade and financial ties with the rest of the world. Default would be one more symptom of that isolation and disruption.

Investment analysts are cautiously reckoning that a Russia default would not have the kind of impact on global financial markets and institutions that came from an earlier default in 1998. Back then, Russia's default on domestic ruble bonds led the U.S. government to step in and get banks to bail out Long-Term Capital Management, a large U.S. hedge fund whose collapse, it was feared, could have shaken the wider financial and banking system.

Holders of the bonds—for instance, funds that invest in emerging market bonds—could take serious losses. Russia, however, played only a small role in emerging market bond indexes, limiting the losses to fund investors.

While the war itself is having devastating consequences in terms of human suffering and higher food and energy prices worldwide, default on government bonds would be "definitely not systemically relevant," International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said. ***(AP)***

'Reduce fuel and electricity use now'

PARIS (AP)—Leaders of three French energy companies called on the French public Sunday to immediately reduce consumption of fuel, oil, electricity and gas amid shortages and soaring prices due to Russia's supply cuts and the war in Ukraine.

"The effort must be immediate, collective and massive," the leaders of the three companies, TotalEnergies, EDF and Engie said in a joint statement published in the French weekly Journal du Dimanche. "Every gesture counts," the statement said.

Russia has cut—and in some case shut off—gas supplies to several European Union countries in retaliation for the 27-member bloc's sanctions against Moscow for its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

The European energy system has been under severe strain for months. The level of alert on gas stocks across the continent is high, and rationing measures have been put in place. France, like other European countries, is trying to beef up its gas reserves for winter, aiming to fill up its storage by early autumn to avert an economic and political crisis.

"Taking action in the summer will prepare us for winter," the energy companies' leaders said.

In addition to the gas supply shortages linked to the war in Ukraine, there are pressures on electricity production capacities in Europe and reductions in hydroelectric production due to drought.

"The soaring energy prices are a result of these difficulties that threaten our social and political cohesion and have a heavy impact on purchasing power of families," the statement said.

Did corporate greed fuel inflation? It's not biggest culprit

WASHINGTON (AP)—Furious about surging prices at the gasoline station and the supermarket, many consumers feel they know just where to cast blame: On greedy companies that relentlessly jack up prices and pocket the profits.

Responding to that sentiment, the Democratic-led House of Representatives last month passed on a party-line vote—most Democrats for, all Republicans against—a bill designed to crack down on alleged price gouging by energy producers.

Likewise, Britain last month announced plans to impose a temporary 25% windfall tax on oil and gas company profits and to funnel the proceeds to financially struggling households.

Yet for all the public's resentment, most economists say corporate price gouging is, at most, one of many causes of runaway inflation—and not the primary one.

"There are much more plausible candidates for what's going on," said Jose Azar an economist at Spain's University of Navarra.

They include: Supply disruptions at factories, ports and freight yards. Worker shortages. President Joe Biden's enormous pandemic aid program. COVID 19-caused shutdowns in China. Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And, not least, a Federal Reserve that kept interest rates ultra-low longer than experts say it should have.

Senior US officials visit Sri Lanka to help resolve crisis

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—Senior U.S. officials were in Sri Lanka seeking ways to help the island nation cope with an unprecedented economic crisis and severe shortages of essential supplies, as the energy minister warned that new fuel shipments would be delayed.

The U.S. over the past two weeks has announced millions of dollars in assistance to the South Asian island nation, which has been surviving on $4 billion in credit lines from neighboring India. It also has received pledges of $300 million to $600 million from the World Bank to buy medicine and other items.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe last week announced the economy had "collapsed" due to dwindling foreign exchange reserves and a mounting debt, worsened by the pandemic and other longer term troubles.

The U.S. delegation was led by Robert Kaproth, deputy assistant secretary of Treasury for Asia, and Kelly Keiderling, deputy assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia.

During their four-day stay, they are meeting with a wide range of political representatives, economists, and international organizations to "explore the most effective ways for the U.S. to support Sri Lankans in need, Sri Lankans working to resolve the current economic crisis, and Sri Lankans planning for a sustainable and inclusive economy for the future," the U.S. Embassy said in a statement.

"This visit underscores our ongoing commitment to the security and prosperity of the Sri Lankan people," said Julie Chung, U.S. ambassador to Sri Lanka.

Nation

AP source: US providing anti-air defense system to Ukraine

ELMAU, Germany (AP)—President Joe Biden is set to announce that the U.S. is providing advanced an surface-to-air missile system to Ukraine, as well as additional artillery support, according to a person familiar with the matter, in the latest assistance meant to help the country defend against Russia's four-month invasion.

The U.S. is purchasing NASAMS, a Norwegian-developed anti-aircraft system, to provide medium- to long-range defense, according to the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. NASAMS is the same system used by the U.S. to protect the sensitive airspace around the White House and U.S. Capitol in Washington.

Additional aid includes more ammunition for Ukrainian artillery, as well as counter-battery radars, to support its efforts against the Russian assault in the Donbas, the person said.

The announcement comes as Biden is huddling with allies this week on supporting Ukraine in meetings at the Group of Seven advanced economies summit in Germany and NATO leaders' annual gathering in Madrid.

Leaders of the Group of Seven economic powers are set to commit themselves to the long haul in supporting Ukraine as they meet in the German Alps and confer by video link with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The G-7 leaders will begin Monday's session of their three-day summit with a focus on Ukraine. Later, they will be joined by the leaders of five democratic emerging economies—India, Indonesia, South Africa, Senegal and Argentina—for a discussion on climate change, energy and other issues.

The war in Ukraine was already at the forefront of the G-7 leaders' minds as they opened their summit at the secluded Schloss Elmau luxury hotel on Sunday—just as Russian missiles hit the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv for the first time in weeks.

U.S. President Joe Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin "has been counting on, from the beginning, that somehow NATO and the G-7 would splinter, but we haven't and we're not going to." Britain's Boris Johnson warned the leaders not to give in to "fatigue."

On Monday, they have the opportunity to demonstrate that unity to Zelenskyy and reaffirm their commitment to supporting Kyiv financially and otherwise.

Biden hopes to use his trip to Europe to proclaim the unity of the coalition pressing to punish Russia for its invasion of Ukraine as much as he is urging allies to do even more—seeking to counter doubts about its endurance as the war grinds into its fifth month.

The summit's host, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, said last week that he wants to discuss the outlines of a "Marshall plan for Ukraine" with his G-7 counterparts, referring to the U.S.-sponsored plan that helped revive European economies after World War II.

With the war still in progress and destruction mounting by the day, it's unlikely to be a detailed plan at this stage. Scholz has said that "rebuilding Ukraine will be a task for generations."

The G-7 already is committed to help finance Ukraine's immediate needs. Finance ministers from the group last month agreed to provide $19.8 billion in economic aid to help Kyiv keep basic services functioning and prevent tight finances from hindering its defense against Russian forces.

A senior U.S. administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations between the G-7 leaders, said the U.S. and Europe are aligned in their aims for a negotiated end to the conflict, even if their roles sometimes appear different.

Pride parades march on with new urgency across US

Revelers march down Fifth Avenue during the annual NYC Pride March, Sunday, June 26, 2022, in New York. AP

NEW YORK (AP)—Pride parades kicked off in New York City and around the country Sunday with glittering confetti, cheering crowds, fluttering rainbow flags and newfound fears about losing freedoms won through decades of activism.

The annual marches in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and elsewhere took place just two days after one conservative justice on the Supreme Court signaled, in a ruling on abortion, that the court should reconsider the right to same-sex marriage recognized in 2015.

"We're here to make a statement," said 31-year-old Mercedes Sharpe, who traveled to Manhattan from Massachusetts. "I think it's about making a point, rather than all the other years like how we normally celebrate it. This one's really gonna stand out. I think a lot of angry people, not even just women, angry men, angry women."

Thousands of people—many decked in pride colors—lined the parade route through Manhattan, cheering as floats and marchers passed by. Organizers announced this weekend that a Planned Parenthood contingent would be at the front of the parade.

In Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot called the top court ruling a "momentary setback" and said Sunday's events were "an opportunity for us to not only celebrate Pride, but be resolved for the fight."

"We will not live in a world, not in my city, where our rights are taken from us or rolled back," said Lightfoot, Chicago's first openly gay mayor, and the first Black woman to hold the office.

In San Francisco, some marchers and spectators held signs condemning the court's abortion ruling. U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who rode in a convertible holding a gavel and a rainbow fan, said the large turnout was an acknowledgement that Americans support gay rights.

"Even in spite of the majority on the court that's anti our Constitution, our country knows and loves our LGBTQI+ community," she told KGO-TV.

Newspaper: Oklahoma gun deaths rose as firearms access grew

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Gun deaths in Oklahoma have increased since a "permitless carry" law allowing people over the age of 21 to carry a gun without a permit or training went into effect in 2019, according to a newspaper's review of data.

The Oklahoman analyzed state medical examiner data and found that Oklahoma has recorded some of its deadliest months in history since the law took effect.

In the decade before "permitless carry," only 10 months had 70 or more firearm deaths. From November 2019 until January, a 15-month span, 10 months had more than 70 gun-related deaths, the newspaper reported. That included 95 deaths in June 2020, the deadliest month in the 12 years of data examined.

The average number of gun deaths per month increased nearly 20% compared with the 10 years before the law took effect, a period in which the population grew just over 6%, according to the newspaper's analysis.

The newspaper reported Sunday that it's hard to determine if the permitless carry law directly contributed to a rise in gun violence. At least some of the increase occurred even as homicides rose nationally in the U.S. in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. But as Oklahoma lawmakers have increased access to firearms over the past decade, firearm-caused suicides, accidents and homicides in the state have increased, The Oklahoman reported.

The debate over gun control measures and efforts to expand gun rights comes following recent mass shootings in Buffalo, New York, Uvalde, Texas, and in Tulsa.

ACROSS THE NATION

Detroit woman charged after body of son, 3, found in freezer

DETROIT (AP)—A Detroit woman has been charged in the death of her 3-year-old son after police found the boy's decomposing body in a basement freezer. The 31-year-old woman is charged with first-degree murder, child abuse and torture and concealing the death of an individual, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said Sunday. She had an arraignment Sunday and was remanded to jail, the Detroit News reported. "The alleged facts in this case have astounded even the seriously jaded," Worthy said. "Our children continue to be at risk—not just from gun violence but also from the alleged murderer that lives in the house with them." Detroit police officers and members of Child Protective Services were conducting a welfare check at the home early Friday when they discovered the boy's body, Police Chief James White said. It was not immediately clear how or when the boy died or how long his body had been in the freezer. Five other children lived at the home, White said. They were placed in the custody of Child Protective Services.

Average US gasoline price drops 4 cents to $5.05 per gallon

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP)—The average U.S. price of regular-grade gasoline fell by 4 cents per gallon in the past two weeks to $5.05 for regular grade, it was reported Sunday. It was the first drop in nine weeks and came with a drop in oil prices amid deepening global inflation fears, industry analyst Trilby Lundberg said. "As lower gasoline prices make their way through distribution to retail, consumers will likely see further declines in coming days," Lundberg said. The average price at the pump as of Friday was still $1.90 higher than it was one year ago. Nationwide, the highest average price for regular-grade gas was in the San Francisco Bay Area, at $6.39 per gallon. The lowest average was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at $4.39 per gallon. According to the survey, the average price of diesel rose 3 cents to $5.89 a gallon.

Asia

Destruction widespread, but help is scarce after Afghanistan quake

GAYAN, Afghanistan (AP)—When the ground heaved from last week's earthquake in Afghanistan, Nahim Gul's stone-and-mud house collapsed on top of him.

He clawed through the rubble in the predawn darkness, choking on dust as he searched for his father and two sisters. He doesn't know how many hours of digging passed before he caught a glimpse of their bodies under the ruins. They were dead.

Now, days after a 6 magnitude quake that devastated a remote southeast region of Afghanistan and killed at least 1,150 people by authorities' estimates, Gul sees destruction everywhere and help in short supply. His niece and nephew were also killed in the quake, crushed by the walls of their house.

The United Nations has put the death toll at 770 people but warned it could rise further. Either toll would make the quake Afghanistan's deadliest in two decades.

"I don't know what will happen to us or how we should restart our lives," Gul told The Associated Press on Sunday, his hands bruised and his shoulder injured. "We don't have any money to rebuild."

AP

A man stands in front of his destroyed house after an earthquake in Gayan district in Paktika province, Afghanistan, Sunday, June 26, 2022.

It's a fear shared among thousands in the impoverished villages where the fury of the quake has fallen most heavily—in Paktika and Khost provinces, along the jagged mountains that straddle the country's border with Pakistan.

Those who were barely scraping by have lost everything. Many have yet to be visited by aid groups and authorities, which are struggling to reach the afflicted area on rutted roads—some made impassable by landslides and damage.

Aware of its constraints, the cash-strapped Taliban have called for foreign assistance and on Saturday appealed to Washington to unfreeze billions of dollars in Afghanistan's currency reserves. The United Nations and an array of international aid groups and countries have mobilized to send help.

China pledged Saturday nearly $7.5 million in emergency humanitarian aid, joining nations including Iran, Pakistan, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in dispatching a planeload of tents, towels, beds and other badly needed supplies to the quake-hit area.

DEEPEST WRECK DISCOVERED

Explorers find WWII Navy destroyer

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A U.S. Navy destroyer that engaged a superior Japanese fleet in the largest sea battle of World War II in the Philippines has become the deepest wreck to be discovered, according to explorers.

The USS Samuel B. Roberts, popularly known as the "Sammy B," was identified on Wednesday broken into two pieces on a slope at a depth of 6,985 meters (22,916 feet).

That puts it 426 meters (1,400 feet) deeper than the USS Johnston, the previous deepest wreck discovered last year in the Philippine Sea also by American explorer Victor Vescovo, founder of Dallas-based Caladan Oceanic Expeditions. He announced the latest find together with U.K.-based EYOS Expeditions.

"It was an extraordinary honor to locate this incredibly famous ship, and by doing so have the chance to retell her story of heroism and duty to those who may not know of the ship and her crew's sacrifice," Vescovo, a former Navy commander, said in a statement.

The Sammy B. took part in the Battle off Samar, the final phase of the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, in which the Imperial Japanese Navy suffered its biggest loss of ships and failed to dislodge the U.S. forces from Leyte, which they invaded earlier as part of the liberation of the Philippines.

According to some records, the destroyer disabled a Japanese heavy cruiser with a torpedo and significantly damaged another. After having spent virtually all its ammunition, she was critically hit by the lead battleship Yamato and sank. Of a 224-man crew, 89 died and 120 were saved, including the captain, Lt. Cmdr. Robert W. Copeland.

1 dead, 1 missing, others rescued in PH ferry fire

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—An inter-island ferry with 165 passengers and crew caught fire off a central Philippine province Sunday, leaving one dead and another missing while the rest were safely rescued, the coast guard said.

The fire hit the vessel Mama Mary Chloe shortly after noon near two island villages in Bohol province, coast guard officials said. A search backed by fishing boats was underway for one missing person.

Footage on social media showed people in life vests bobbing in the sea, with the vessel engulfed in thick black smoke.

The ferry, which was carrying eight crew members and 157 passengers, including 15 children, was en route to the eastern province of Leyte from Bohol.

Sea accidents are common in the Philippine archipelago because of frequent storms, badly maintained boats, overcrowding and weak enforcement of safety regulations.

In December 1987, the ferry Dona Paz sank after colliding with a fuel tanker, killing more than 4,300 people in the world's worst peacetime maritime disaster.

World

G-7 leaders to commit to Ukraine

ELMAU, Germany (AP)—The Group of Seven economic powers are set to commit themselves to supporting Ukraine in the long haul, with the U.S. preparing to announce the purchase of an advanced surface-to-air missile system for Kyiv, as leaders meet in the German Alps and confer by video link with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The G-7 leaders will begin Monday's session of their three-day summit with a focus on Ukraine. Later, they will be joined by the leaders of five democratic emerging economies—India, Indonesia, South Africa, Senegal and Argentina—for a discussion on climate change, energy and other issues.

■■■

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Russia shattered weeks of relative calm in the Ukrainian capital with long-range missiles fired toward Kyiv early Sunday, an apparent Kremlin show-of-force as Western leaders meet in Europe to strengthen their military and economic support of Ukraine.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said the missiles hit at least two residential buildings, and President Volodymr Zelenskyy said a 37-year-old man was killed and his 7-year-old daughter and wife injured. Associated Press journalists saw emergency workers battling flames and rescuing civilians.

The strikes also damaged a nearby kindergarten, where a crater pocked the courtyard. U.S. President Joe Biden called the attacks "barbarism" after he arrived in Germany for a Group of Seven summit.

■■■

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President Joe Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin "has been counting on, from the beginning, that somehow NATO and the G-7 would splinter, but we haven't and we're not going to." Britain's Boris Johnson warned the leaders not to give in to "fatigue."

On Monday, they have the opportunity to demonstrate that unity to Zelenskyy and reaffirm their commitment to supporting Kyiv financially and otherwise.

Biden is set to announce that the U.S. is providing an advanced surface-to-air missile system to Ukraine, as well as additional artillery support, according to a person familiar with the matter, in the latest assistance meant to help the country defend against Russia's bloody invasion.

The U.S. is purchasing NASAMS, a Norwegian-developed anti-aircraft system, to provide medium- to long-range defense, according to the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. NASAMS is the same system used by the U.S. to protect the sensitive airspace around the White House and U.S. Capitol in Washington.

Additional aid includes more ammunition for Ukrainian artillery, as well as counter-battery radars, to support its efforts against the Russian assault in the Donbas, the person said.

Biden hopes to use his trip to Europe to proclaim the unity of the coalition pressing to punish Russia for its invasion of Ukraine as much as he is urging allies to do even more—seeking to counter doubts about its endurance as the war grinds into its fifth month.

WORLD BRIEFS

Norway: Suspect in Pride Month attack won't talk to police

OSLO, Norway (AP)—The suspect in a mass shooting during an LGBTQ festival in Norway has refused to explain his actions to investigators and will remain in pretrial custody for the next four weeks, police and his defense lawyer said Sunday. The man, whom authorities described as a 42-year-old Norwegian citizen originally from Iran, was arrested shortly after the shooting in Oslo's nightlife district early Saturday. He is being held on suspicion of murder, attempted murder and terrorism. Two people were killed and more than 20 were injured in what the Norwegian security service called an "Islamist terror act." Oslo police said they tried to question the suspect on Saturday and again on Sunday without success. Norwegian media identified him as Zaniar Matapour. Matapour's defense lawyer, John Christian Elden, told The Associated Press by email that his client refused to have his statement recorded and videotaped unless police released the entire recording to the public "with no time delay so it won't be censored or manipulated."

21 dead in South African nightclub; cause not yet known

JOHANNESBURG (AP)—South African police were investigating the deaths of at least 21 people at a nightclub in the coastal town of East London early Sunday and authorities said most of the victims were minors as young as 13 years old. It is unclear what led to the deaths of the young people, who were reportedly attending a party to celebrate the end of winter school exams. Local newspaper Daily Dispatch reported that bodies were strewn across tables and chairs without any visible signs of injuries. "At this point we cannot confirm the cause of death," said health department spokesperson Siyanda Manana. "We are going to conduct autopsies as soon as possible to establish the probable cause of death." Police minister Bheki Cele said the victims' ages ranged from 13 to 17, raising questions about why the underaged teenagers were being served alcohol.

6 police officers killed in northern Mexico ambush

MEXICO CITY (AP)—Six police officers were killed and four others wounded Sunday in the northern Mexico border state of Nuevo Leon after they were ambushed by a presumed drug gang equipped with 10 home-made armored cars and heavy weaponry. Nuevo Leon state police said the patrol was outnumbered in the pre-dawn attack on a highway leading to the Colombia border crossing. The force said the officers performed "heroically" in the attack. State prosecutors said the dead included one female officer. There was no immediate information on the identity of the attackers. But the nearby city of Nuevo Laredo has long been dominated by the violent Northeast cartel.

Overdrive

The 2023 Honda HR-V grows in social stature and size

By LARRY PRINTZ
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Would you guess that Honda offers the highest number of American-made cars offered in the U.S.? Probably not. But more than that, their models are designed specifically for the American market. Just consider today's subject, the all-new, redesigned 2023 Honda HR-V.

Offered in base LX, mid-level Sport and top-of-the-line EX-L trim levels, the 2023 HR-V is significantly larger than before, having grown 9.4 inches in length and 2.6 inches in width. But there's a maturity to the new HR-V that was somehow lacking in the previous version, no longer resembling the overgrown hatchback that it was. In fact, the new HR-V is larger than the first generation 1996 CR-V, and about the same size as the second generation 2002 model. Strangely, the added size only adds about one cubic foot of cargo space, and has less when you fold the rear seats. Passenger volume also decreases to 98.7 cubic feet from 100.1 cubic feature. So, it's bigger on the outside and smaller on the inside.

Its added size comes from its use of the latest 11th-generation Civic platform, rather than the Honda Fit architecture employed for the first-generation and new overseas HR-V, dubbed the Vezel in Japan.

But that switch in platforms also brings about an upgraded interior. No longer a snug pseudo crossover awash in cheap hard plastics, the 2023 HR-V retains the simple, spartan functionalism that's classically Honda.

The EX-L's cabin features soft-touch and perforated leather-like seats at the edge of the instrument panel and perforated leather-like seats help you forget the hard plastic door panels. But they do have room for two beverage bottles. Despite the reduction in interior space, the HR-V feels roomier inside, with ample room for tall drivers behind the wheel and generous adjustability for both the driver's seat and the tilt telescopic steering wheel. The top of the center console is rounded and padded, making for a comfy perch to rest your right leg while driving. But while the driver gets power seat adjustments, the front passenger makes do with a manual recliner. Rear seat space is good, but the cushion is low and flat and lacks a center armrest.

The tech package mirrors that of the new Civic, there's a large space for wireless smartphone charging and a second spot for wired charging. The test cars featured two USB-A and USB-C chargers. Customers who purchase the base LX trim get a fairly basic 7-inch touchscreen. Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are included when upgrading to themed-level Sport trim. The top EX-L model has a far better 9-inch high-definition display that supports wireless CarPlay and Android Auto, an eight-speaker music system and Qi wireless smartphone charging.

As you'd expect given its Civic roots, The HR-V gets a new 2.0-liter inline four-cylinder engine that generates 158 horsepower and 138 pound-feet of torque, an increase of 31 horsepower and 11 pound-feet over the 1.8-liter inline-four found in the first-generation CUV. A continuously variable transmission is standard and is offered with either front- and all-wheel drive.

The new engine's increased power reduces fuel economy compared to the original HR-V, however. It returns 28 mpg in combined EPA city/highway driving with front-wheel drive and 27 mpg with all-wheel drive. Thankfully, it uses regular unleaded fuel.

Power is sufficient when the driving mode selector is set to Normal, and noticeably more enticing when the shifter is in Sport mode. But the CVT can't be shifted manually to extract the most fun. Nevertheless, most drivers will find it well behaved, without the whine and lag that afflicts too many CVTs. You can still drive it with some gusto when the road warrants, as it lacks the previous HR-V's excessive turbo lag off the line and its gooey "motorboating" as the CVT rushes to catch up with the engine.

Best of all, the driveline is far less buzzy and markedly more refined.

Steering is a little loose on center and firms up at highway speeds. Most will appreciate it, and find it just right as it's far better than the previous HR-V's loose, light steering that was bereft of feel or fun. The HR-V is nimble, but not sporty, lively enough for tackling the twisties. But really push it and some body lean sets in, although grip remains impressive. Still, it's far better than the previous all-wheel-drive model's DeDion suspension or the front-wheel-drive model's torsion bar set-up. It's far more stable, no longer leaning at the least little provocation. It does a very good job of absorbing most road shocks, with only the worst bumps getting through. Like many Hondas, there's above average road and tire noise.

It makes for a far more sophisticated and involvingßå experience than the previous buzzbomb, one that has clearly climbed a rung on the social scale.

Just don't let it get to you head. HR-V doesn't stand for His/Her Royale Vehicle.

NUTS & BOLTS

2022 Honda HR-V EX-L AWD

- Base price: $23,605-$28,950
- Engine: 2.0-liter four-cylinder
- Horsepower/Torque: 158/138 pound-feet
- EPA fuel economy (city/highway): 25/30 mpg
- Observed fuel economy: 27.5 mpg
- Fuel required: Regular unleaded
- Length/Width/Height: 179.8/63.8/72.4 inches
- Ground clearance: 7 inches
- Curb weight: 3,333 pounds
- Cargo capacity: 24.4-55.1 cubic feet

Clunk costs a chunk of change

Q: My 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee suddenly developed a clunk downshifting at a stop sign. Then, at the next stop sign, even my wife heard it. Took it to my local garage here, who I have great trust in, as they have saved me a lot of money. They used a machine to analyze it and they indeed fixed the clunk. In looking at the invoice, there was labor charge: reprogram PCM/TCM $175. Not in an upset mode, I simply inquired as to what is a "reprogram PCM/TCM $175." He kinda stammered as if he was unable, yet not unwilling, to answer. The implication I got was that he was not the sure what the machine does, but it simply fixes the clunk, and it did! Can you give me a better idea of what happened?

A: Have you ever downloaded an update for one of your phone's apps? You are quite able to use it without knowing how the app works. In the case of the Jeep, your mechanic downloaded an update for both your powertrain control module (PCM) and your transmission control module (TCM). He knew what to do without needing to know what the update modified.

Q: I have a high-performance 2007 Shelby GT Mustang that has a supercharger, and it requires premium octane (91-94) gasoline, which you know is very expensive. Could I purchase regular octane (87) or midgrade octane (88-90) gas and add a bottle of STP or Lucas octane booster fluid and get the same or similar octane result, rather than paying the high prices at the retail gas pump?

A: A bottle of octane booster in a 20-gallon tank may increase the octane rating a few points. Do the math and you may be surprised.

Q: When electric vehicles become more commonplace than cars powered by gasoline, do you think that the cost of electricity will fluctuate the way that gasoline prices do? Would it affect the home electricity bill beyond the vehicles' share of consumption?

A: Gas prices fluctuate because gasoline is a commodity. Electricity prices are controlled by state utilities agencies. To increase prices, power providers must usually petition the agency for permission. Fortunately, electricity fluctuations are limited to only occasional brownouts.

Q: I have a 2003 Chevy Trailblazer with 138,000 miles. My wife drove it and now it's mine. I have always set the headlights so they always are on, and I have burned out two or three modules over the years as well as a few headlights. Should I just put the lights on when I drive at night or in the rain?

A: Roughly one-third of the states require headlights be turned on whenever the wipers are turned on. (Florida is not one of those states.) Nevertheless, it's a good habit and increases both your safety and the safety of other drivers. Otherwise, you may choose to leave the headlights off. Your daytime running lights are adequate during mild weather.

Q: I know I should wax my car twice a year, but I don't. That being said, and leaving my car outside of the garage all year, would it be better to wax prior to several months of hot sun during the summer, or snow, ice and freezing temperatures in our Northeastern winter?

A: Wax your car in the spring and fall. Not only does this prepare it for those rough seasons, the agreeable weather is more favorable for doing the job—preferably with a cold beer nearby.

Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.

MOTORMOUTH
By BOB WEBER
Chicago Tribune

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. He maintains this status by seeking certification every five years. Weber's work appears in professional trade magazines and other consumer publications. His writing also appears in automotive trade publications, Consumer Guide and Consumers Digest*. Send questions along with name and town to Motormouth, Rides, Chicago Tribune, 160 N. Stetson Ave., Fourth Floor, Chicago, IL 60601 or*

Life & Style

Rick Astley revisits his career-making song with 'gratitude'

NEW YORK (AP)—How does Rick Astley handle one of his songs being part of the biggest internet meme of all time? He rolls with it, obviously.

"Listen, let's face it, 'Never Gonna Give You Up' has sort of become something else," he says. "The video and the song have drifted off into the ether and become something else, and I'm ever so grateful for it."

That song turns 35 this year and is still very much alive, buoyed by a second chapter as a gentle joke wherein someone baits you with an enticing online link, which points instead to the video for this 1987 dance-pop smash. It's called Rickrolling.

Thirty-five years later, Astley is singing it this summer on tour with New Kids on the Block, Salt-N-Pepa and En Vogue for the 57-date "The Mixtape Tour 2022." A remastered version of his 1987 debut album also has been released featuring, of course, "Never Gonna Give You Up."

"I'm never going to have a song as big as that ever, and I kind of knew that while it was happening. I kind of thought, 'We're never going to beat this.' But I also kind of thought, 'Well, how bad is that?'"

There has always been much more to Astley than just that song. After blowing up in the late 1980s, he left show business frustrated and has only recently reemerged with the strong albums "50" in 2016 and "Beautiful Life" in 2018.

"Often the second act can be more enjoyable because you're more in control and you savor every minute," said Alistair Norbury, president of repertoire and marketing at BMG UK, which signed Astley.

The passage of time—and the fact that Astley is such a sweet guy—has softened any sharpness. He says he understands how the past can look different with rose-colored glasses. Rock stars have lately told him they love his voice.

"And I'm like, 'Really? I thought you would have strung me up in the village square," he says, laughing. "They probably would have done at the time, but I think over time, I think it just changes your perspective."

Astley, 56, is the youngest of four who grew up near Manchester, England. His sister played a lot of progressive rock and adored David Bowie. A brother was a huge Queen fan, and he remembers Queen's "Night at the Opera" album played on a loop. Astley soaked it all in, from Stevie Wonder to The Smiths.

He was in a band in school—they once performed "So Lonely" by The Police with Astley on drums and singing—that wiped the floor with rivals at a battle of the bands. He would go to gigs and dream of being a music star.

He remembers being astounded one day when he spotted the bass player of The Smiths walking through town. "This can happen?" he recalls thinking. "You can be from a town that I buy my records in but last week you were on 'Top of the Pops?'"

Astley was only in his early 20s while recording his debut album, "Whenever You Need Somebody," with the songwriting and record production trio known as Stock Aitken Waterman, who had crafted songs for Bananarama and Dead or Alive.

AP

British singer-songwriter Rick Astley poses for a portrait before a concert at the Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Ill., on June 17, 2022.

"I sold a lot of records. I was having a lot of hits, and then it was getting to a point where it's like touch and go—how is this going to go now because you have to make another record?"

Burned out and frustrated, he walked away at 27. "I think I just didn't have it in me. I just didn't. I didn't want to do it," he says.

He admires pop stars like Madonna or Kylie Minogue for their longevity. "I actually don't know how they've done it," he says.

Being a pop star messes with your head and Astley says that happened to him, too. "I think my days were numbered anyway, but I think I just managed to get out before they threw me out, you know?" He didn't perform for 15 years.

Unlike other pop stars, he hadn't invested his ego in his looks or others' perceptions. "I was never cool. I wasn't cool when I had my hit records," he says. Astley has nothing but compassion for those chewed up by the fame monster. "It must be unbelievably painful."

Astley reemerged from self-exile in 2016 with "50," named, with a hat-tip to Adele, for his age at the time, a strong album that veers from gospel to electro-funky.

Norbury recalls hearing the first few demos on the album and being impressed. He asked Astley's manager who wrote them. The answer was "Rick Astley." He asked who was the co-writer?" The answer was, "Nobody." Who produced? "Rick." Then who played all the instruments? "He played all the instruments."

Norbury calls Astley "probably one of the hardest working people in this business and always does it with good humor and with a spirit of collaboration and partnership."

Rickrolling started in 2007—at the infancy of YouTube—and it confused Astley at the beginning. His song and video for "Never Gonna Give You Up" were being used as part of an internet bait-and-switch, but what did it mean?

"I was overthinking it and worrying about it and wondering what it was. And our daughter said to me—she was about 15 at the time—she just kind of said, 'You do realize it's got nothing to do with you?'" She also predicted: "There'll be something else next week or tomorrow."

"She was slightly wrong because it's still kind of kicking around here and there," says Astley. "But the sentiment of what she was saying was, I think, really, really valuable. I embrace my past, but I don't have to embrace the Rickrolling thing in the same way because I accept the fact that it's got nothing to do with me to some degree."

The song has racked up 1.2 billion streams on YouTube and 559 million Spotify listens. Time Out magazine was always a little puzzled by Rickrolling, asking why anyone wouldn't want to hear the buoyant mega-jam, saying it is "three and a half of the most effervescent minutes in the '80s canon."

Astley, of course, sees "Never Gonna Give You Up" differently than the people who use it to try to mess with friends. He acknowledges the video is "unbelievably late-'80s cheesy" but "it's a good memory. It's like a fond memory."

For Astley, it is the song that led him to Copenhagen, where he met his wife, Lene Bausager. Without that song, he wouldn't have his daughter or have traveled the world. "I've been to some of the most amazing places in the world that most people have on a bucket list."

He thinks back to the days when he was a new artist looking up to established acts. Now he's a seasoned pro with an arsenal of songs, including an instant crowd-pleaser.

"At the time, I was like green with envy and felt totally insecure and all the rest of it. Now, when I walk out on a stage and sing those songs, I just kind of think, 'Yeah, how lucky am I? Ain't that great?'"

Granddaughter's behavior at funeral offends family

DEAR ABBY: Our dear mother recently passed away after an extended illness. We all knew it was inevitable, but it didn't make our loss any easier. My siblings and I were devastated, and we still are. The day of her funeral was especially hard.

One of our older daughters brought her children, our granddaughters (13 and 19 years old), to the funeral. While everyone else was dressed appropriately, one of our granddaughters wore tattered jeans with a loose top that exposed her belly. When one of her uncles mentioned her attire, she snapped that we had better things to think about. I was very upset and wanted to yell at her to leave, but my grief overcame my anger.

The whole time this granddaughter was there, she made sure everyone knew she was. I burst into tears, but that didn't seem to bother her. Rather than allow the family to grieve, it was more important to her that nobody was going to tell her what to do.

I want to tell her how we all felt about her attire and her attitude. I don't want to ruin my relationship with her, but honestly, if another family member passes, none of us wants to deal with her attitude while we are grieving. How do I tell her how disrespectful she was and that the time was not for her -- it was for us as a family to grieve?

STILL SAD IN THE EAST

DEAR STILL SAD: Your granddaughter's behavior at her great-grandmother's funeral was atrocious. It was worse than her attire. The people who should "explain" proper attire and funeral etiquette to her are her parents, not you. Discuss this with them when you can do it calmly, since you and your siblings still are in pain, and your emotions are raw.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: I am a stepfather to five kids. Three are over 18; the other two are young teens. I need help explaining to my wife the importance of having the younger kids take responsibility in life. Each time I start talking about it, she says it stresses her out.

She has a busy career and shoulders the responsibilities the kids should be doing. She's a wonderful mother, but I feel she is becoming a crutch to them. I want the kids to be successful, but I think they are being held back. How do I address this in a positive way?

LOST FOR WORDS IN MICHIGAN

DEAR LOST: Sometimes well-meaning parents can do too much for their kids. A positive way to approach this sensitive subject with your wife would be to explain that you want those children to be capable of becoming INDEPENDENT when they are older. To achieve that, they need to learn certain skills NOW so they can practice them while they are young adults.

Many families accomplish this by giving their tweens and teens an allowance in return for taking on certain household chores. It shouldn't stress out your wife to discuss this with you and consider the wisdom of it. Because she is so busy working, it might be helpful if you took the lead on this by broaching the subject with the kids, and showing them what they have to gain if they agree.

■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

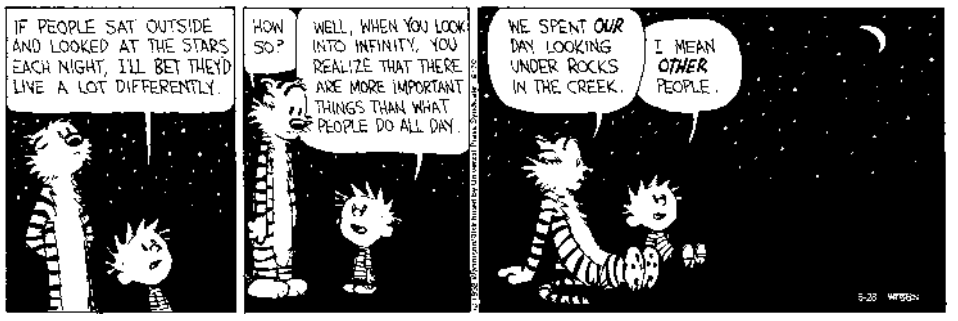
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

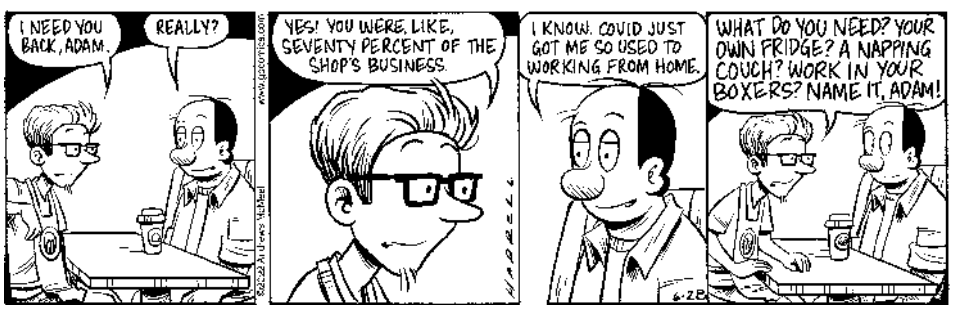

IF PEOPLE SAT OUTSIDE AND LOOKED AT THE STARS EACH NIGHT, I'LL BET THEY'D LIVE A LOT DIFFERENTLY.
HOW SO?
WELL, WHEN YOU LOOK INTO INFINITY, YOU REALIZE THAT THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS THAN WHAT PEOPLE DO ALL DAY.
WE SPENT OUR DAY LOOKING UNDER ROCKS IN THE CREEK.
I MEAN OTHER PEOPLE.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


I NEED YOU BACK, ADAM.
REALLY?
YES! YOU WERE, LIKE, SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE SHOP'S BUSINESS.
I KNOW. COVID JUST GOT ME SO USED TO WORKING FROM HOME.
WHAT DO YOU NEED? YOUR OWN FRIDGE? A NAPPING COUCH? WORK IN YOUR BOXERS? NAME IT, ADAM!

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WAITER, THERE ARE HAIRS ON MY FOOD!
I THINK THE OWNER WOULD BE WILLING TO GIVE YOU A COUPON.
FOR A FREE MEAL?
NO. HE HAS A SIDE BUSINESS SELLING REFURBISHED NOSE-HAIR TRIMMERS.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

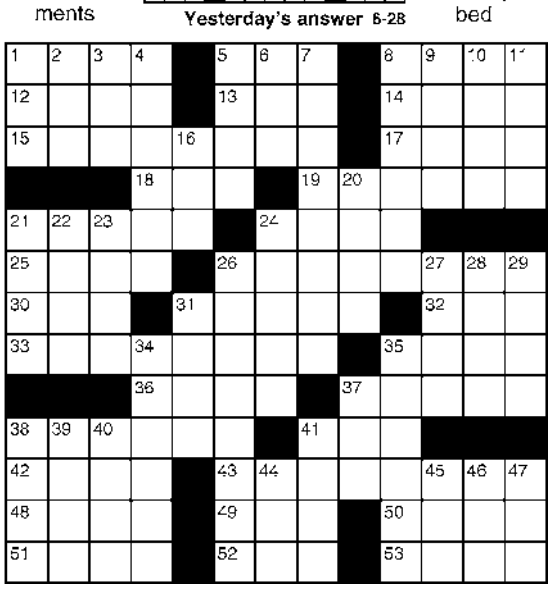
ACROSS
1 Detail
5 "Traffic" org.
8 "Hey, you!"
12 Dealer's foe
13 Personal
14 Mad king of theater
15 Plane engine
17 Lighten
18 Historic period
19 Bowling rounds
21 Deep sleeps
24 Banquet platform
25 Actor Julia
26 "Fathers and Sons" novelist
30 Sashimi fish
31 Espresso foam
32 Actress Longoria
33 Commotions
35 Go yachting
36 Priestly vestments
37 Delicious fruit?
38 "Ed Wood" star Martin
41 Have a cold
42 "Metamorphoses" poet
43 Curry powder spice
48 Couturier Chanel
49 PC key
50 Continental currency
51 Recognized
52 "Mayday!"
53 Tree house

DOWN
1 Bankbook abbr.
2 Greek cross
3 Blunder
4 TV role for Flockhart
5 "Vegas" singer — Cat
6 Lamb's mama
7 Colonies with tunnels
8 Make happy
9 Fashion line?
10 Postpaid enc.
11 "— chic!"
16 Hosp. areas
20 Latvia's capital
21 Suffix with "techno"
22 Waikiki's island
23 Naturalist John
24 Sword fights
26 Homages
27 Tide type
28 Satan's forte
29 Dell
31 Soda flavor
34 Rachel of MSNBC
35 Ill will
37 Goal
38 Canal feature
39 Bard's river
40 French city
41 Curved lines
44 Mil. morale booster
45 Wish undone
46 Tax-collecting org.
47 Camp bed

Solution time: 22 mins.

I	M	P		A	B	Y	S	M		R	A	M
O	A	F		B	L	A	K	E		I	M	O
S	O	C	K	S	A	W	A	Y		G	O	D
			O	U	T		T	E	C	H	I	E
I	N	D	I	R	A		E	R	A	T		
N	O	R		D	N	A		S	T	A	B	S
C	L	O	D		T	A	M		S	W	A	P
H	A	V	O	C		S	F	T		A	D	F
		E	R	O	C		S	W	A	Y	E	D
C	L	A	M	O	R		S	I	S			
R	A	W		L	O	C	K	S	A	W	A	Y
A	M	A		I	N	U	I	I		O	L	E
B	A	Y		T	O	R	T	S		W	E	T

Yesterday's answer 6-28



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mary Stuart Masterson, 56; John Cusack, 56; Kathy Bates, 74; Mel Brooks, 96.

Happy Birthday: Take care of your health and financial well-being. Leave nothing to chance, and don't rely on someone to take care of your responsibilities. Keep everything in perspective, and be rational regarding your expectations. It's OK to do things differently, but having a sound plan is essential. Strive for perfection, and you'll be happy with what transpires this year. Your numbers are 6, 17, 25, 28, 32, 38, 41.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* You've got your finger on the pulse. Use optimism and intelligence to get others to contribute to your plans. Don't get angry at the wrong person; take responsibility and channel your energy into accomplishment. Personal gain is near. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Having a good attitude will help you navigate life. Don't feel you have to bend every time someone puts pressure on you. Be reasonable but also direct about what you want. Compromising and negotiating are your tickets to success. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* You can be a superstar if you direct your knowledge, experience and dedication toward something meaningful. Look at the big picture, and call on associates you trust to contribute something substantial. Personal growth is favored, and romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Situations will not be as they appear. Question anyone offering something too good to be accurate, and don't let gullibility get you in trouble with someone who can influence your reputation or status. Speak the truth, and finish what you start. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Focus on acquiring knowledge, skills or information that can improve your health and well-being. Speak to experts, map out what's possible and maintain a budget that you can afford. A steady pace and hands-on effort will pay off. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Pay attention to detail, and do your best to minimize whatever you can wherever possible. Your actions will have a more significant effect on what you are trying to accomplish than your words. Take matters into your hands, and get things done your way. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Someone close to you will be a poor influence or liability. Distance yourself from anyone lacking restraint or someone who's trying to bully you into something that isn't in your best interest. Look out for yourself, and take good care of your health. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* An open mind will inspire unique concepts. Toy with existing possibilities, and gather information that helps you develop your ideas. Address a domestic issue that can slow you down. Honesty is the best policy, even if it will prompt opposition. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Pull in the best minds and those with skills that can help you use your persuasive charm to get what you want. Create an inviting space, and you'll be surprised how quickly things transpire. A partnership looks promising. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Keep the peace, regardless of what others do. You'll come out on top. Ignore invitations that tempt you or can lead to emotional stress. Make work, promotions and getting things finished on time your priorities. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Move things around to make your workspace or home more convenient. Don't let what others do lure you off course. Put your energy where it brings the highest return, and don't hesitate to present and promote what you accomplish. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Don't let extravagance win, and don't be tempted by what others have or do. Follow the path that is conducive to reaching your long-term plans. A physical or mental challenge will put you at risk. Don't believe everything you hear. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, compassionate and unique. You are imaginative and inquiring.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	2	6		8		1		
				1				
	4				7			9
9		1						7
	8	5				6	2	
6						5		3
3			2				7	
				6				
		7		9		8	4	

Difficulty Level ★★ 6/28

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

3	1	4	5	6	7	9	8	2
5	8	7	9	2	4	1	3	6
9	2	6	3	1	8	4	7	5
2	5	3	8	7	9	6	1	4
8	4	1	6	3	5	2	9	7
6	7	9	2	4	1	3	5	8
4	3	8	7	9	2	5	6	1
7	6	2	1	5	3	8	4	9
1	9	5	4	8	6	7	2	3

Difficulty Level ★

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

EVERY DAY IS BACON DAY Solution: 7 letters

S	P	E	C	U	A	S	F	G	N	I	P	P	O	T
E	T	S	A	T	A	O	L	U	N	C	H	G	A	U
N	P	U	R	V	C	P	A	O	S	B	U	E	S	N
R	U	A	O	A	B	E	V	V	I	M	M	C	S	O
O	R	R	T	R	L	U	O	E	Z	A	A	G	T	D
C	Y	Y	A	S	P	U	R	N	Z	L	G	A	A	B
P	S	G	T	E	A	S	P	G	L	E	T	K	U	E
O	U	T	A	L	T	P	S	O	E	O	V	R	V	M
P	Y	S	E	E	A	T	P	L	P	R	R	O	D	E
A	E	D	A	L	R	S	E	E	E	I	T	P	L	I
N	K	K	A	I	E	M	Y	L	T	S	Z	E	O	N
C	R	A	P	L	A	M	K	O	P	I	S	Z	S	W
A	U	S	L	R	A	S	O	U	P	A	Z	U	A	O
K	T	S	A	O	R	S	M	E	L	L	M	E	R	R
E	H	C	I	U	Q	T	S	A	F	K	A	E	R	B

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Appetizer, Breakfast, Brownie, Brussels Sprouts, Burger, Burrito, Caramel, Donut, Eggs, Flavor, Gum, Lamb, Love, Lunch, Maple, Meat, Omelet, Oven, Pancake, Pasta, Peas, Pizza, Popcorn, Popular, Pork, Potato, Quiche, Ragù, Roast, Salad, Salty, Sauce, Savory, Scallops, Sizzle, Smell, Smoky, Soap, Sold, Soup, Steak, Stove, Strips, Syrup, Taco, Taste, Topping, Turkey

Yesterday's Answer: Bartender

To purchase **THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 53 through 68,** order online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Judge's 28th homer gives Yankees 4-game split with Astros

NEW YORK (AP)—Aaron Judge walked over to the stands and gave his bat to Spike Lee, a Yankees fan famous for scripting Hollywood dramas.

This weekend's Astros-Yankees series had all the ups, downs and twist endings audiences could handle. And when baseball's award season arrives, bet on critics taking a hard look at Judge's leading role.

"I told him I have to quit taking him for granted," manager Aaron Boone said.

Judge drove a three-run homer in the 10th inning for his second walk-off hit against the Astros in four days, and New York recovered after nearly being no-hit for the second consecutive game to beat Houston 6-3 Sunday.

"These guys, they never waver," Judge said. "They stick to their plan, stick to their approach and continue to grind it out. And then Big G hit one about 120 to center, so it was all good."

Giancarlo Stanton ended a historic hitless drought for New York with a one-out, 111 mph homer in the seventh inning, and DJ LeMahieu followed with a tying two-run drive in the eighth as New York split a four-game series between the AL's top teams.

"Ended up Judge 2, Us 2," Houston manager Dusty Baker said.

After Michael King stranded the bases loaded in the 10th, Isiah Kiner-Falefa dropped a two-strike bunt that moved automatic runner Aaron Hicks to third. Right-hander Seth Martinez intentionally walked pinch-hitter Matt Carpenter and struck out LeMahieu, setting up a two-out showdown with the Judge.

Just like on Thursday, when he broke a 6-all tie with a single in the ninth, Judge lifted the major league-leading Yankees. His 112 mph rocket to left-center on a slider landed in the visiting bullpen for his big league-high 28th home run.

"What I marveled at was just how easy he swung," Boone said. "It's like he's just trying to touch the ball."

With their 10th walkoff win this year — and third from Judge — the Yankees improved to 53-20 and matched the third-best 73-game start in the majors since 1930, trailing only the 2001 Mariners and 1998 Yankees.

AP

New York Yankees right fielder Aaron Judge (99) celebrates with New York Yankees second baseman Matt Carpenter (24) after hitting a game-winning home run against the Houston Astros during the 10th inning of a baseball game, Sunday, June 26, 2022, in New York.

Angels 2, Mariners 1

In Anaheim, Calif., a lengthy bench-clearing brawl resulted in the ejections of six players and both managers in the second inning.

Los Angeles interim manager Phil Nevin and Seattle's Scott Servais were ejected. The Angels lost Andrew Wantz, closer Raisel Iglesias and reliever Ryan Tepera, while Jesse Winker, Julio Rodriguez and J.P. Crawford were tossed for the Mariners.

Luis Rengifo homered and David MacKinnon drove in the tiebreaking run with a single in the seventh. Marco Gonzales (4-8) pitched five-hit ball into the seventh inning of a hard-luck loss.

José Suarez (1-2) greatly helped the Angels' depleted bullpen when he relieved Wantz and struck out eight over six innings of five-hit ball. Oliver Ortega got six outs for his first major league save.

Dodgers 5, Braves 3, 11 innings

In Atlanta, Chris Taylor had three hits, including the go-ahead double in the 11th, lifting Los Angeles past Atlanta.

The Dodgers, who scored two runs in the ninth to force extra innings, won two of three games in the weekend series between the last two World Series champions.

Taylor's double off Darren O'Day (1-2) glanced off the glove of third baseman Austin Riley as Cody Bellinger scored from third base. Trea Turner padded the lead with a run-scoring single to center field. Brusdar Graterol pitched a scoreless 11th for his first career save.

Atlanta's Kenley Jansen and the Dodgers' Craig Kimbrel (1-3) each had blown saves against their former teams. Jansen gave up two runs in the ninth to blow a 2-0 lead, and Kimbrel gave up Matt Olson's tying single to lead off the 10th.

Phillies 8, Padres 5

In San Diego, Kyle Schwarber hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the seventh off Nabil Crismatt (4-1) as Philadelphia rallied from a 5-2 deficit, one day after losing NL MVP Bryce Harper with a broken left thumb.

The Phillies are 17-6 since Rob Thomson replaced Joe Girardi as manager.

Nick Nelson (2-1) pitched 3 1/3 perfect innings, and Andrew Bellatti got three outs for his first big league save.

Red Sox 8, Guardians 3

In Cleveland, Trevor Story drove in two runs to reach 500 career RBIs, Rafael Devers and J.D. Martinez each had three hits and Boston finished a three-game sweep that extended its winning streak to seven.

Boston had 15 hits and drew 11 walks, its highest total since May 2019. The Red Sox have won 11 of 13 and are 19-4 in June, improving to a season-high 11 games over .500 at 42-31.

Rich Hill (4-4) allowed one run, five hits and four walks in six innings. Aaron Civale (2-4) gave up three runs, eight hits and three walks over four innings.

Cleveland has lost four straight since a 7-2 trip.

Marlins 3, Mets 2

In Miami, rookie Nick Fortes homered off Adam Ottavino (2-2) with two outs in the ninth, helping Miami avoid a three-game sweep by the NL East leaders.

Tanner Scott (3-2) walked J.D. Davis leading off the ninth. Davis advanced on a wild pitch and reached third on Luis

Guillorme's one-out groundout. Scott struck out James McCann to end the threat.

Rays 4, Pirates 2

In St. Petersburg, Fla., Shane McClanahan (8-3) struck out 10 over seven innings, allowing one run and four hits. He lowered his major league-leading ERA to 1.77 ERA and grabbed the big league lead in strikeouts with 123.

Tampa Bay took a 4-1 lead in the seventh on Ji-Man Choi's run-scoring double and RBI singles by Josh Lowe and Isaac Paredes off Anthony Banda, who replaced Tyler Beede (0-1) with one on and two outs.

It appeared the inning was over with the score still 1-1 when Randy Arozarena was called out attempting to steal second. The call by second base umpire Dan Merzel was overturned when a video review shortstop Diego Castillo missed the tag.

White Sox 4, Orioles 3

In Chicago, Dylan Cease (6-3) struck out a career-high 13 and allowed four hits over seven innings, Gavin Sheets hit a two-run homer in the second against Jordan Lyles (4-7) and Chicago avoided a four-game sweep.

Kendall Graveman struck out Trey Mancini for his third save as the White Sox snapped a four-game skid. The Orioles' season-high four-game winning streak ended.

Twins 6, Rockies 3

In Minneapolis, Byron Buxton had three hits, including an RBI triple for the second straight game, and Minnesota opened a two-game lead over second-place Cleveland heading into a five-game series at the Guardians.

Joe Ryan (6-3) grinded through 102 pitches over five innings for his first win in more than a month, and Jhoan Durán struck out two in a perfect ninth for his fifth save.

Max Kepler, Alex Kirilloff and Gio Urshela hit consecutive RBI singles in a three-run first against Ryan Feltner (1-3) .

Athletics 5, Royals 3

In Kansas City, Mo., Seth Brown hit his 10th home run of the season and Nick Allen hit a go-ahead two-run single off Brady Singer (3-3) to overcome a 3-2, seventh-inning deficit.

Oakland took two of three from the Royals, ending an eight-series losing streak. The A's won back-to-back games for the first time since May 24 and 25 at Seattle. They have lost 30 of their last 39 games.

Domingo Acevedo (1-1) won, and Lou Trivino got his fourth save. Brady Singer (3-3) gave up five runs and seven hits in a career-high 8 1/3 innings.

Cubs 6, Cardinals 5, 10 innings

In Chicago, Willson Contreras hit a tiebreaking single in the 10th off Zack Thompson (1-1) to drive in his third run of the game, and Chicago overcame a 5-0 deficit.

Cardinals starter Jack Flaherty left after two innings because of right shoulder tightness, and the Cubs tied the score with a five-run fourth. The Cardinals have lost three of their last four games and seven of their last 10.

David Robertson (2-0) retired three straight batters, and the Cubs took two of three from their rival. Chicago has won four of its last five series in St. Louis.

Brewers 10, Blue Jays 3

In Milwaukee, Rowdy Tellez hit a pair of two-run homers against his former team, going deep in the first and second innings off off José Berríos (5-4), and Milwaukee took two of three.

Jandel Gustave (1-0) pitched two scoreless innings. Alejandro Kirk hit a three-run homer in the first.

Nationals 6, Rangers 4

In Arlington, Texas, Jackson Tetreault (2-1) allowed one run in six-plus innings in his third major league start, Josh Bell had his second three-hit game of the weekend and Nelson Cruz drove in three runs.

Texas scored three in the ninth inning against Francisco Perez on Nathaniel Lowe's RBI single and Jonah Heim's two-run homer. Tanner Rainey came on for his 10th save.

Glenn Otto (4-3), activated from the COVID-19 list before the game, allowed the six runs in two innings in his first appearance since June 4.

Reds 10, Giants 3

In San Francisco, Tyler Mahle (3-6) struck out seven in 6 2/3 innings while allowing three runs and four hits for his first victory since May 13.

Nick Senzel singled three times on a day when every Reds starter had at least one hit.

Anthony DeSclafani (0-2), who played for the Reds from 2015-20, retired eight batters and allowed seven runs and seven hits.

Joey Votto hit an RBI double in a seven-run third, Cincinnati won two of three from San Francisco after losing seven straight.

Diamondbacks 11, Tigers 7

In Phoenix, Daulton Varsho hit a three-run homer, Pavin Smith had a career-high four hits with three RBIs and Arizona stopped a five-game losing streak.

Former AL Cy Young Award winner Dallas Keuchel made his debut for Arizona after signing a minor league contract on June 6. He gave up four runs and six hits in 4 1/3 innings while striking out seven and walking three.

Reliever J.B. Wendelken (2-1) won despite allowing two runs in 1 2/3 innings. Will Vest (1-2) was the loser.

Magic takes Banchero 1st, Holmgren, Smith follow in NBA draft

NEW YORK (AP)— The question for weeks leading into the NBA draft was whether the first pick would be Paolo Banchero, Chet Holmgren or Jabari Smith Jr.

The answer finally came Thursday night — and even Banchero didn't know it until moments before the announcement of the Orlando Magic's selection.

"I had a feeling from the information I was being told is that it was just kind of up in the air," Banchero said. "Orlando wasn't really sure yet, and just to be ready for whatever.

"I didn't find out, though, that I was actually getting picked until about 20 seconds before the commissioner got on the stage. I didn't even have time to really think about it or anything. It just kind of happened. I can't believe it, but I'm ready. I'm ready."

After leading the Blue Devils to the Final Four in coach Mike Krzyzewski's final season, the 6-foot-10 forward was called first by NBA Commissioner Adam Silver to begin the draft, beating out fellow first-year forwards Smith and Holmgren.

The order had been debated throughout the process, with Smith often considered the player who would go No. 1.

Instead, he wasn't even second, falling behind Holmgren to Houston at No. 3.

"Definitely added a chip, but God makes no mistakes, so I'm happy to be here," Smith said. "I'm happy to be where I'm wanted. I'm happy to get to Houston and just show them, give them what they picked. Just happy to be here."

All the players picked looked thrilled, with Banchero among those crying or coming close as they hugged friends and family.

Wearing a purple suit full of bling, he received a loud ovation inside Barclays Center, where Duke lost in the ACC Tournament final. He came the fourth Duke player taken No. 1 since 1966, when the NBA did away with territorial draft rights, and was followed by Blue Devils teammates Mark Williams (No. 15, Charlotte), A.J. Griffin (No. 16, Atlanta) and Wendell Moore Jr. (No. 26, Dallas).

The Magic were picking first for the fourth time and they've done well with their previous choices. They took Shaquille O'Neal in 1992, traded the rights to Chris Webber for Penny Hardaway the next year, and went with Dwight Howard in 2004.

All eventually reached the NBA Finals with the Magic.

Holmgren went second to the Oklahoma City Thunder after the 7-footer led the West Coast Conference in blocked shots, rebounding and shooting percentage at Gonzaga. He looked sharp in his black suit but may need it to eventually be a bigger size for success in the NBA, as he's listed at just 195 pounds.

He's not worried about that talk.

"I wake up every day with a plan on how to make myself a better person, better basketball player," Holmgren said. "I put so much effort into executing that, that it doesn't really leave room to put effort into things that, one, I can't control, and two, don't help make me better."

The Rockets were happy to end up in Smith who has the skills to go higher. The 6-10 forward from Auburn is a natural fit in the current NBA game, able to defend all three frontcourt positions and with a shooting stroke that allowed him to hit 42% behind the arc.

Forward Keegan Murray, after a huge leap in his second season in Iowa, jumped all the way to the No. 4 pick by the Sacramento Kings. The Detroit Pistons, a year after taking Cade Cunningham with the No. 1 pick, took athletic Purdue guard Jaden Ivey fifth.

Before the selections began, Silver congratulated the Golden State Warriors on their recent NBA championship and reminded fans that their core of Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson and Draymond Green was built through the draft.

All the teams at the top of this draft need help and have recent high picks already on their rosters, so will hope the Warriors way works for them as well.

AP

Paolo Banchero, right, poses for a photo with NBA Commissioner Adam Silver after being selected as the number one pick overall by the Orlando Magic in the NBA basketball draft, Thursday, June 23, 2022, in New York.

Bennedict Mathurin, a Canadian who played at Arizona, went to Indiana with the No. 6 pick. The Portland Trail Blazers followed with Kentucky's Shaedon Sharpe, Dyson Daniels of the G League Ignite was taken eighth by New Orleans, Baylor's Jeremy Sochan stayed in Texas with San Antonio at No. 9, and Washington rounded out the top 10 with Wisconsin's Johnny Davis.

Then the trades began, with the New York Knicks moving picks to amass more of them. They dealt the rights to No. 11 pick Ousmane Dieng to Oklahoma City for four first-round selections, then used one of them to acquire the rights to No. 13 pick Jalen Duren from Charlotte and deal him along with Kemba Walker to Detroit for another pick, a person with knowledge of the details told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because that trade would not become official Thursday.

Walker spent one season with the Knicks but wasn't with the team after the All-Star break after battling knee problems.

The Warriors made Patrick Baldwin Jr. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee their pick at No. 28 and the first round ended with Oklahoma City taking UCLA's Peyton Watson and agreeing to trade his rights to Denver.

Notable names in the second round included Gonzaga guard Andrew Nembhard (No. 31, Indiana), Ohio State's EJ Liddell (No. 41, New Orleans) and Southern California's Isaiah Mobley (No. 49, Cleveland, where brother Evan plays).

Take two: Steve Clifford returns to Hornets as head coach

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)— Steve Clifford is heading back to Charlotte.

Clifford has agreed to a multiyear contract to return as head coach of the NBA's Hornets four years after being fired by team owner Michael Jordan, the team announced Friday night.

Charlotte previously agreed to terms on a four-year contract with Golden State assistant Kenny Atkinson to become head coach, but Atkinson later informed the team he was not taking the job citing family reasons.

"I'm happy to be returning to Charlotte, and I want to thank Michael Jordan, Mitch Kupchak and Buzz Peterson for this opportunity," Clifford said in a release. "This is an exciting young team with a lot of talented pieces. Charlotte is a great city and I know first-hand the passion that Hornets fans have for this franchise. I can't wait to get back to town and start working with our players."

The 60-year-old Clifford spent five seasons coaching the Hornets from 2013-18, compiling a 196-214 record with a team that included Kemba Walker.

He led the Hornets to two playoff appearances prior to being dismissed in 2018 when Kupchak arrived as general manager. Clifford coached the Orlando Magic from 2018-21, reaching the playoffs twice. He spent last season as a coaching consultant for the Brooklyn Nets.

Clifford is 292-345 in eight seasons as an NBA coach.

His best season in Charlotte came in 2015-16 when the Hornets went 48-34 and lost in seven games to the Miami Heat in the first round the playoffs.

Team owner Michael Jordan met Wednesday with Clifford, who left the team on good terms in 2018.

Clifford, known as a defensive-minded coach, inherits a team that eighth on offense last season but 22nd on defense. The Hornets gave up 132 points in a 29-point loss to the Hawks in the play-in elimination game last season, which didn't sit well with Jordan.

The Hornets finished sixth, 10th, ninth, 17th and 17th in defensive rating during Clifford's five seasons.

During his eight seasons as an NBA head coach, Clifford's teams have never finished outside the top five in the league in fewest turnovers committed, and in seven of his eight campaigns his team finished in the top two in offensive rebounds allowed and the top five in defensive rebound percentage.

Kupchak said he expects the Hornets to continue to play at a high pace.

"Steve is committed to playing with the same offensive pace that our fans are accustomed to seeing the last few years," Kupchak said. "We are confident that he will be able to help our young players continue to grow as we look to take the next step as a team."

Clifford inherits a team that is arguably more talented than any of his previous Charlotte teams with All-Star point guard

LaMelo Ball, Gordon Hayward and Miles Bridges anchoring the squad.

Atkinson's decision to the renege on his contract on Saturday shocked the Hornets and sent them scrambling for a replacement.

Kupchak said that it was "disappointing," but that in some ways he's grateful it happened when it did.

"I think he would have been a good pick, but if he's not comfortable here I would rather find out now than a year from now," Kupchak said Thursday night during the NBA draft.

Mike D'Antoni and Terry Stotts were also in consideration for the job.

Kupchak orchestrated the team's draft this year without a head coach in place, but said it was not a big deal and that in the pas years he's worked with coaches who aren't even in the draft room.

Charlotte team traded its 13th overall pick to the New York Knicks for a future first round pick and four second round picks and then took Duke center Mark Williams at No. 15. Charlotte added Nebraska guard Bryce McGowens in the second round after Kupchak made another trade.

"The roster is really what wins games," Kupchak said. "A good coach is going to help with the roster, but the most important thing is to get the roster together."

The general manager said Atkinson's decision reminded him of when Steve Kerr turned down the Knicks coaching job, only to go to Golden State where he's won four NBA titles.

"It looks like (Kerr) make a good decision to take the job at Golden State," Kupchak said with a laugh. "So maybe Kenny spoke to Steve, and Steve said, 'Hey, maybe things will work out this way for you.' I don't know."

Kupchak also pointed out NFL coach Bill Belichick abruptly resigning before his introductory news conference with the New York Jets in 2000. Belichick went on to coach the New England Patriots and win six Super bowls.

"That was a good decision, too. So maybe Kenny is on to something," Kupchak quipped.

Atkinson has not responded to interview requests from the AP seeking comment about his decision to back out of the agreement. However, Kerr told NBC Sports that Atkinson turned down the job because he didn't want to uproot his family again.

DFS Group donates $100K to Mini Games

DFS Group donated $100,000 to the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 just before the CNMI National Baseball Team faced off against Guam last June 16 at the Francisco "Tan'Ko" M. Palacios Baseball field.

"For us, you know we are a global company. DFS is part of the LBMH group and for us to be able to contribute to our home here on Saipan where we consider ourselves part of the family and part of the community is a great honor," said DFS Group managing director Richard Gustafson.

He added that being a platinum sponsor the Mini Games is doubly special since the quadrennial event is held "coming out of this two years of the COVID-19 pandemic."

DFS Group vice president of Operations Rachel Tan said she's proud of what the company is doing as part of the bigger Saipan family to really contribute not only to the growth of the economy but also the tourism industry in the CNMI.

Mini Games Organizing Committee CEO Vicente "Ben" Babauta thanked the donation of DFS Group, which is a company close to his heart.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

DFS Group, led by managing director Richard Gustafson, donated $100,000 to Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 during a turnover ceremony last June 16 at the Francisco "Tan'Ko" M. Palacios Baseball Field.

"DFS has been always part of the community for the past 40 years. I also worked for them for 30 years…We are truly thankful for DFS Group, who has donated a generous sum of $100,000, and have teamed up to present the athletes souvenir bags as well as increased their hours Friday through Sunday until 9pm. Their extension of kindness works toward the improvement of the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games and the enjoyment of the attendees, participants, and all those involved with the Games. Thanks to their support, the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 can continue to bring the people of the Pacific together, strengthening our ties, and celebrating our commonalities and our diversity. ***(PR)***

LAKHAN

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praise for the manner in which you all performed," he said.

"To succeed in any endeavor, in any undertaking you need support, you need resources, and you need funding. In this regard, firstly, I thank Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, his Cabinet, and his government for all the support provided in ensuring we had a successful Games in CNMI. Secondly, I thank the corporate citizens of CNMI, the many sponsors, for joining hands with the Games Organizing Committee in making things happen," added Lakhan.

"I was told by one of your legislators, that in the CNMI, your people live in the same country, you breathe the same air, you all eat the same food, you all see the same sun and the same moon, and at night, when the lights go out in the bedrooms, you all do the same thing, always united in purpose," he said.

"Well, you did unite in purpose in hosting these Games. You rose to the challenge and made us all proud!"

He then lauded Team NMI's tenacity and performance throughout the Games and said "you have had your best performance ever at these Games, and in front of your own people; your performances were exceptional."

"Every citizen of CNMI must be proud of your achievements as we, the Pacific Games Council, are proud of your achievements. To the people of CNMI, as we prepare to leave your shores, we say 'congratulations. Thank you for your hospitality, thank you for a wonderful and memorable Games,'" said Lakhan.

In the medal tally after the Games, NMI placed third overall among the 20 participating countries, and collectively won 16 gold medals, 13 silver medals, and eight bronze medals, for a total of 38 medals.

NMI teams won in each of the nine sport categories in this year's Games, garnering a medal or more in weightlifting, badminton, tennis, baseball, *va'a*, golf, athletics, triathlon, and beach volleyball.

The last time Team NMI joined the Pacific Games was in 2019 in Samoa and won three gold medals and one silver medal for a total of four medals.

With close to 1,000 spectators attending the closing ceremony in person and more watching the livestream, the closing ceremony highlights included the parade of the 20 participating countries, similar to the opening ceremony, cultural Chamorro and Carolinian dances, the announcement of the female and male athletes of the Games, both from Papua New Guinea, the ceremonial Pacific Games flag presentation to the next host country, Palau, by Mini Games Organizing Committee CEO Vicente "Ben" Babauta, appreciation plaque presentations to acting governor Jude U. Hofschneider and MGOC chair Marco Peter, extinguishing of the Games cauldron flames, and a vibrant 20-minute fireworks show to officially close off the Games.

Turning over the Pacific Games flag

Palau National Olympic Committee secretary general Joyleen Baklai Temengil received the Pacific Games flag from Babauta and said in her speech, "On behalf of my team Palau 2022, Palau PGA president… honorable President Surangel Whipps Jr., of the Republic of Palau, the chair of the Palau Pacific Mini Games 2025 Organizing Committee… and the people of Palau, I'm honored to receive the Games' flag. Congratulations to all the athletes in the Northern Mariana Islands for an exceptional Games. Biba CNMI! We look forward to hosting and welcoming you once again to the north, and this time to welcome you to the Republic of Palau [in] 2025… Thank you, congratulations everyone. We love you."

Temengil then directed everyone's attention to the big screen where a video of Palau and its athletes were on display for everyone in attendance to see and expect in the Games there in 2025, and was greeted with rounds of applause. Team Palau's excitement was not contained as scenes from their home country's baseball field, track and field, oceans, and scenery were on display for the athletes and audience.

Babauta and Temengil then graced the track with a little dance of cha-cha to the beat of the Mini Games 2022 theme song as the fireworks exploded in the skies and officially closed a historic moment in the CNMI.

PNG

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was her coach Paul Coffa, his wife Lilly, and the Coffa family.

"I've been with them since 2022 and this means so much to me. The credit goes to him and to my family for the support they've always given me. [Before when] I was young and single then I had my children they're still behind me and they've always supported me," said the mother of two.

Toua said being a world-class weightlifter has had its share of challenges.

"It's a lot of sacrifices that I've put in by leaving my two kids behind but I have my in-laws, my parents, my siblings to take care of them while I do my training. It's a contribution, like I said, of a lot of people and that includes my government, my Olympic committee, and my federation—PNG Weightlifting Federation—my sponsors and all the other corporate sponsors and everybody in Papua New Guinea that contributed toward my success. And I'm really grateful to the Lord above for everything he's done to my life because I believe without Him I wouldn't be this successful," she said.

Baru, for his part, got the nod for best male athlete of the 2022 Games after winning three gold medals and the Oceania Weightlifting Championships gold medal in the 61-kg class.

Like Toua, the 32-year-old Olympian was also caught by surprise with the best athlete of the Games honor.

"Oh, I was really surprised because I thought they're gonna announce another name. But when I heard my name I was like what! I was really shocked."

Baru is dedicating the best athlete award to all the PNG athletes and the officials who took part in this Games.

PNG chef de mission Kila Dick commended Toua and Baru for being named best athletes of the Games.

"It's a big achievement for Dika and Morea to win the best athlete honors. It means all the hard work and commitment they put in the sport paid off. It's a great honor for them to win those awards and I'm grateful and honored to be part of their team."

PNG tops medal tally

Meanwhile, PNG earned the most gold medals of the Games after finishing with 33 gold, 28 silver, and 19 bronze medals.

The Melanesian country got 23 gold medals from athletics, six from weightlifting (three each from Toua and Baru), and four from tennis, where they swept all women's events (singles, doubles, and team) plus the mixed doubles on the strength of the Apisah family (Abigail, Violet, and Patricia) and Davis Cup player Matthew Stubbings.

Coming in second in the medal tally is Tahiti with 22 gold, 15 silver, and 21 bronze medals, while host the Northern Marianas had its best ever performance in the Games—Pacific Games or Mini Games—with 16 gold, 13 silver, and nine bronze medals.

Dick said it's a big achievement for their delegation to win the most medals in the Games

"Our athletics team goes overseas and they train overseas. They go to the U.S. and there's scholarship programs there for all of our athletics athletes and that's the reason why they're always on top of their performances."

Dick also praised Toua, Baru, and the entire athletics team.

"Our weightlifters go down to Australia for their training and that gives them the strength, the attitude, the commitment, and the dedication that they have to come to that level," he said.

Dick also took the opportunity to thank the Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee for a well hosted 11th staging of the quadrennial event.

"We're satisfied with all the arrangements—the accommodations, transport, the venues, the food. It's been outstanding and I'm satisfied with all the arrangements made by the host organizing committee," he said.

BLAS

From Page 20

under a lot of undue pressure," Blas said.

"And what a tribute this is, to mark today pn Saipan for the Pacific Mini Games where we are still celebrating the sports movement in a tiny Pacific Island in the north."

Blas also said the Games demonstrates the resilience of Oceania in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We enjoyed the Tokyo Olympic Games last year on a minimum standard to safeguard the athletes and the Japanese community."

He said the Olympic movement has remained stronger together with good leadership and called on everyone to join the movement in whatever form or way to promote sports and the role of sports in advocating peace.

Reflections on the Pacific Mini Games

Oceania is represented by 17 Olympic countries and six associate members so Blas said ONOC's support last week has been through the National Olympic Committees' participation here.

"Their presence elevates the competition as well as the delivery level of the event," Blas said.

"It also exposes and promotes a country like the CNMI to the rest of the world," he added.

There are also continuing discussions between ONOC and the Pacific Games Council on the joint delivery of the Pacific Games in Oceania.

Blas also had this message to the athletes of the Games:

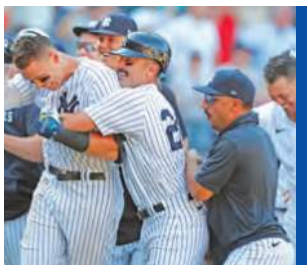
"You came, you endured, you showed strength and to those standing on the podiums, never forget those that are not on the podium with you—and that had contributed to your success."

He also extended his best wishes to everyone as they start their journey home soon.

Blas encouraged them to keep training hard as they've got a year and six months left before they all meet in Honiara (2023) and soon after that Palau (in 2025) and also Tahiti (in 2027).

"We continue to encourage all the NOCs and Associate Members to focus on their development programmes and also their athletes," Blas commented.

Staff of the ONOC Secretariat in Suva, Fiji, celebrated Olympic Day with a zumba session and a 2.5-kilometer walk last June 22. ***(PR)***



Judge's 28th homer gives Yankees 4-game split with Astros

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Lakhan: CNMI raised the bar

NMPMG2022/ANDO AGULTO

Mini Games Organizing Committee CEO Vicente "Ben" Babauta is flanked by the Marianas High School ROTC color guard as he makes his way back to the grandstand with the Pacific Games Council flag on hand.

NMPMG2022/ANDO AGULTO

Pacific Games Council president Vidya Lakhan makes his remarks during the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 closing ceremony last Saturday at the Oleai Sports Complex.

By LEIGH GASES
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CORRESPONDENT

In a spectacular end to an exciting 10-day event, Pacific Games Council president Vidya Lakhan praised the CNMI last Friday during the closing ceremony at the Oleai Sports Complex for raising the bar in hosting the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 after overcoming many challenges.

"You overcame the challenges of the recent typhoons and the COVID-19 pandemic, you forgot your own pain and sufferings, and devoted your time and energy in preparing to host the Pacific Mini Games," he said in his speech.

Lakhan went on to list what the CNMI did well as a host for the Games and said, "In doing so, you raised the bar in many areas. For the first time in the history of the Pacific Games, all the delegations were housed in hotels instead of schools converted into dormitories. The critical areas of food and Games transportation were all superb. I understand that this is one of the largest multinational events you have hosted in CNMI. There has been nothing but

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Blas: Fitting ONOC celebrated Olympic Day during Games

Oceania National Olympic Committees secretary general Ricardo Blas said it's befitting that ONOC marked Olympic Day last June 23 at the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 on Saipan.

"Olympic Day is a celebration of sport and more particularly the advancement of programmes for athletes, as directed by the International Olympic Committee," he said.

CONTRUBUTED PHOTO

Oceania National Olympic Committees' Voice of the Athletes group promotes Olympic Day at the *va'a* competition of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 near the 13 Fishermen Monument in Garapan.

Speaking from the 11th staging of the quadrennial event in the capital island of the CNMI, Blas said that Olympic Day represents a day for athletes around the world, by honoring those (athletes) who have committed themselves to the success of the global sporting community.

"And with this year's theme of 'Move for Peace' we remember the Ukrainian athletes who continue to face challenges

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PNG weightlifters are athletes of the Games

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Papua New Guinea weightlifters Dika Toua and Morea Baru were hailed best athletes of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 during the closing ceremonies last Saturday at the Oleai track & field.

Toua topped the women's 49-kg class with three gold medals in the snatch, clean & jerk, and overall and in the process took home her 13th overall Oceania Weightlifting Championships gold medal.

Just like when she received the news of the International Weightlifting Association Hall of Fame enshrinement, the 38-year-old teared up after learning that she won the best athlete award.

"I was surprised again. I keep getting surprised. It's been a blessing and I'm very grateful to everyone who contributed toward my achievements."

Among those she thanked

See PNG on Page 19

MARK RABAGO

Papua New Guinea's chef de mission Kila Dick, third from left, is flanked by Morea Baru and Dika Toua and other athletes and officials during the closing ceremony of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last Saturday night at the Oleai track & field.